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ESSENCE OF RAMAYANA

BY

SRI SWAMI SIVANANDA,

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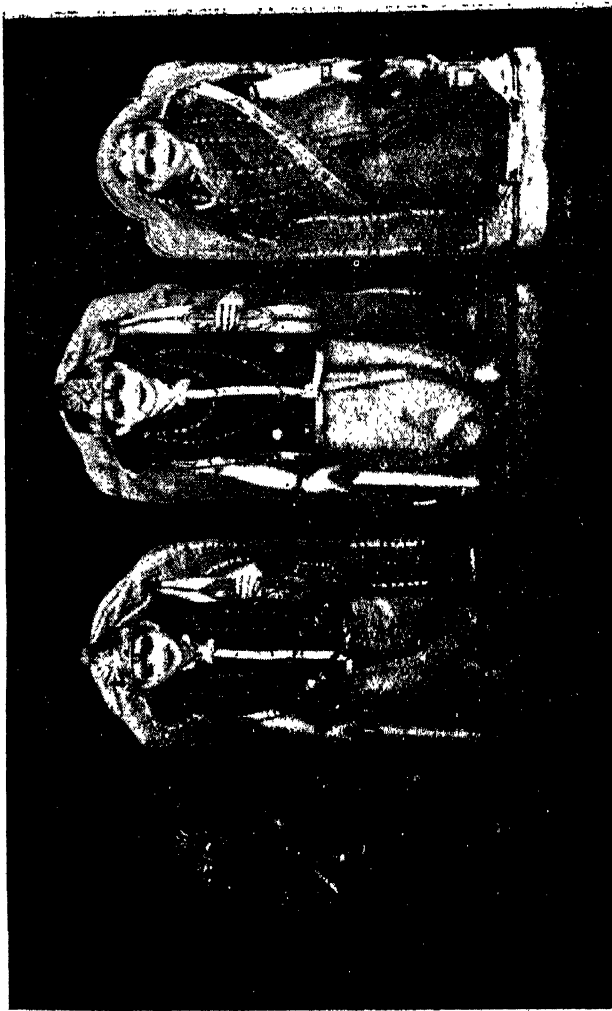
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The means by which Sri Rama can be reached is to take
His Name and to remain saturated in it.—

Swami Sivananda.

DEDICATED
TO
LORD SRI RAMA
AND THE
DEVOTED HANUMAN



Hanuman.

Lakshmana

Sri Rama.

Sita Devi.

3

8th Sept 1943

Friends,

Ramayana is the most ancient and glorious epic in the world. It contains the highest ideals of Hindu culture and civilisation.

It is a text book of morals for the youths to inspire them to loftier and sublime ideals of conduct and character.

The very names Rama and Sita produce a holy thrill in the hearts of those who read Ramayana

Sivananda

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SECTION I

PRELIMINARY

Ekasloki Ramayana

(Ramayana in one verse)

पूर्वं राम तपो वनादिगमनं हत्वा मृगं काञ्चनं
वैदेही हरणं जटायु मरणं सुग्रीव संभाषणम् ।
वाल्मी निग्रहणं समुद्र तरणं लंकापुरी दाहनं
पश्चात् रावण कुम्भकर्ण मथनं एतद्धि रामायणम् ॥

Formerly Sri Rama went to the forests (where Rishis did penance) and killed the illusive deer. Sita was carried away and Jatayu was killed. (Rama) met Sugriva, killed Vali and crossed the ocean. The city of Lanka was burnt (by Hanuman). Ravana and Kumbhakarna were then killed, Thus (is recited) the holy Ramayana.

1. The Kalpaka Tree

कल्याणानां निधानं कलिमलमथनं पावनं पावनानाम् ।
पाथेयं यन्मुक्तोः सपदि परपदं प्राप्तये प्रस्थितस्य ॥
विश्रामस्थानमेकं कविवर वचसां जीवनं सज्जनानां ।
बीजं कल्पद्रुमस्य प्रभवतु भवतां भूतये रामनाम ॥

The seat of all good things, the destroyer of the impurities of the Kali age, purer than purity itself, the food for the journey of the Mumukshus (Aspirants) who have started on the pilgrimage to the supreme abode of Bliss, the only resting place, the very life-breath of virtuous men, the sages say, is the Name of Sri Rama, the seed of the tree Kalpaka (wish-fulfilling tree).

2. Sri Rama Mangalam

मंगलं कोसलेन्द्राय महनीय गुणान्वये ।

चक्रवर्ति तनूजाय सार्वभौमाय मङ्गलम् ॥१॥

1. Mangala (auspiciousness and victory) to the king of the Kosalas, the ocean of great virtues, the son of the great emperor (Dasaratha), to (Sri Rama) the emperor.

वेद वेदान्त वेद्याय मेघश्यामल मूर्तये ।

पुंसां मोहन रूपाय पुण्यश्लोकाय मङ्गलम्

2. To the knower of the Veda and Vedanta, to Him of the colour of the dark cloud, with a form enchanting to the eyes of men, to Him with meritorious fame, let us pronounce Mangalam.

विश्वामित्रान्तरङ्गाय मिथिला नगरी पतेः ।

भाग्यानां परिपाकाय भव्यरूपाय मङ्गलम् ॥३॥

3. Let us chant Mangalam to the Lord who was dear to sage Vishwamitra, to Him with attractive form and the fully ripe fruit of the fortune of the King of Mithila.

पितृभक्ताय सततं भ्रातृभिः सह सीतया ।

नन्दिताखिललोकाय राम भद्राय मङ्गलम् ॥४॥

4. Mangalam to Ramabhadra, who was always devoted to his father, together with Sita, and his brothers and who delighted the whole world.

त्यक्त साकेत वासाय चित्रकूट विहारिणे ।

सेव्याय सर्वयमिनां धीरोदाराय मङ्गलम् ॥५॥

5. Mangalam unto the Lord who left Ayodhya and lived in Chitrakuta, adored by all sages, who was ever kind and brave.

सौमित्रिणा च जानक्या चाप बाणसि धारिणे ।

ससेव्याय सदा भक्त्या स्वामिने मम मङ्गलम् ॥६॥

6. May Mangalam be to my Lord who is worthy of being served at all times with devotion, the Lord who lived in the forests with Lakshmana and Janaki, with bows, arrows and sword.

दण्डकारण्य वासाय खण्डितामर शत्रवे ।

गृधराजाय भक्त्या मुक्तिदायास्तु मङ्गलम् ॥७॥

7. Mangalam to Him who lived in the Dandaka forest, who destroyed the enemies of the Devas, and who bestowed emancipation on the devoted king of birds, Jatayu.

सादरं शबरीदत्त फलमूलाभिलाषिणे ।

सौलभ्य परिपूर्णं सत्कोदिकताय मङ्गलम् ॥८॥

8. Mangalam to the extremely amiable Rama who accepted with great love and affection the fruits and roots of Sabari and to Him who is all-full and kind, who is all Sattva.

हनूमत्समवेताय हरीशभीष्टदायिने ।

बालि प्रमथनायास्तु महाधीराय मङ्गलम् ॥९॥

9. Mangalam to the great hero who was ever served by Hanuman, who fulfilled the desires of the devotee of Hari (Vibhishana) and who destroyed the wicked Vali.

श्रीमते रघुवीराय सेतूब्रह्मतसिन्धवे ।

जितराक्षस राजाय रणधीराय मङ्गलम् ॥१०॥

10. Mangalam to the great hero Sri Raghava who crossed the ocean over a bridge, who overcame the Rakshasas in fight, who was chivalrous in battle.

आसाद्य नगरीं दिव्यां अभिषिक्ताय सीतया ।

राजाधिराज राजाय राम भद्राय मङ्गलम् ॥११॥

11. Let us chant praises of Mangala to the King of Kings, Sri Ramabhadra who reaching the divine city of Ayodhya was crowned together with Sita.

3. Salutations to Valmiki

कूजन्तं राम रामेति मधुरं मधुराक्षरम् ।

आरुह्य कविता शाखां वन्दे वाल्मीकि कोकिलम् ॥

I adore the lark Valmiki who having climbed the high branch of poesy sings in nectarine accents the blessed and sweet name of the Lord "Rama, Rama, Rama."

4. Relationship of Hanuman with Sri Rama

देह बुद्ध्यास्तु दासोऽस्मि जीवबुद्ध्या त्वदंशकः ।

आत्मदृष्ट्या त्वमेवाहं इति मे निश्चिता मतिः ॥

Hanuman says: "Looked at from the point of view of the body I am Thy slave, from the point of view of the embodied self a portion of Thy energy, from the point of view of the Atma Thy own Self. This is my settled belief."

5. Sumitra's instructions to
Lakshmana

रामं दशरथं विद्धि मां विद्धि जनकात्मजाम् ।
अयोध्यामटवीं विद्धि गच्छ तात यथासुखम् ॥

Look upon Sri Rama as king Dasa-
ratha, Janaki as myself (Sumitra) and
the forest as Ayodhya city. Go thou
my son (to the forest) and be happy.

6. Ahalya's Prayer

Ever do I bow unto that Hari who has in this incarnation assumed a human shape and is called Rama, who is of a delightful form, who carried the bow, whose eyes are large like the lotus. I bow unto no other.

The dust of whose lotus feet is to be sought for through the Vedas, from the lotus in whose navel sprang forth the lotus-seated Brahma, whose name is ever cherished by the God Siva, that Ramachandra do I cherish in my heart day and night.

I take refuge in Him whose deeds in various incarnations are sung in the world of Brahma by Narada, Siva and Brahma and the rest, as well as by the goddess of speech with tears of joy running down her breasts.

This Rama is verily that supreme self—the ancient Purusha, the self illumined, without limitation, beginning of all. Assuming a human form through Maya, he deludes the world. This is his supreme grace.

This Rama who is free, full and the self of all, is alone the cause of creation, preservation and destruction of the world. Through his Maya, he becomes reflected in the various attributes of goodness, activity and darkness and assumes the names of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva.

O Rama! Reverence to thy lotus feet which are lovingly placed on her breast by Lakshmi. Only one of thy feet pervaded the three worlds in days of

yore. They are now meditated upon by Munis devoid of egotism.

Thou art the beginning of the world. Thou art the world itself. Thou art the refuge of the world. Thou art unattached, to every thing, thou shinest as the supreme self of all.

O Rama ! thou art that which is expressed by the syllable OM. Thou art the Purusha, beyond the range of speech. Thou art verily the world itself.

Thou alone, O Rama, appearest under the various distinctions of effects, causes, actors, fruit of action and means of attainment thereof, through thy Maya of many forms.

Deluded by Thy Maya O Lord, people do not know Thee and think Thee who are the Lord of Maya to be a human personality.

Like Akasa thou art everywhere, inside and outside, undefiled, unattached, unmoving, ever permanent, ever awake and one without a second.

O Lord, how can I a foolish and ignorant woman know Thy true nature. Therefore O Rama with a single heart do I make hundreds of reverences to Thee. O Lord wherever I may incarnate may I always be attached to Thy lotus feet and have firm devotion to Thee alone.

Reverence be to Thee, O thou chief of men ! salutations to Thee, O thou who art ever dear to thy devotees, salutations to Thee ! O thou Lord of the senses, salutations to Thee, O Narayana, salutations to Thee.

I make reverence to that Rama, and his brother, who is the one destroyer of the fear of the world, who is resplendent like hundreds of millions of suns,

who carries the bow and the arrow, who is of the colour of the blue cloud, who wears robes of golden hue and ear-rings studded with gems and whose eyes are like the full blown lotus.

7. Abode of Rama

Thus I have told thee of thy ordinary place of residence. O scion of the Raghu race, as thou has asked me for a special place of residence along with Sita, I shall tell thee, O best of Raghus, of what is thy permanent temple. Those who are of a peaceful disposition, who look upon all with equal eye, who cherish no enmity to any creature, who always worship thee alone, their heart is thy temple.

He who having risen above both Dharma and Adharma, what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, day and night, worships thee alone together with Sita, even his heart is thy temple of peace.

He who reciting thy (Mantra) holy name has taken shelter in thee alone, who is free from all pairs of opposites, and who cherishes no avarice, even his heart is thy beautiful temple.

Those who are free from all sense of 'I', who are contented, who are free from attachment and aversion, who look upon a piece of gold and a piece of stone and clay with equal eye, even their heart is thy temple.

He who has dedicated his mind and intellect to thee, who is always contented, who has relinquished all actions to thee, even his heart is thy beautiful home.

He who does not feel pain on the advent of the painful, nor joy on the advent of the pleasurable, who knowing all this to be Maya, worships thee alone, even his mind is thy abode.

He who sees the six changes in the body and not in the self, hunger and thirst, fear and grief as the attributes of the Prana and Buddhi, who is above the vicissitudes of life, his heart is thy home.

Those who see thee abiding in the cave of the heart as All-intelligence, Truth, Infinity and Unity, as above all effects, as pervading all, as the worshipful object of all, do thou abide in their hearts together with Sita.

Those whose minds have become firm by incessant devotion to thee, those who are always devoted to the service of thy feet, those whose sins have been washed off by recitation of thy name, the lotus of their heart is thy temple of residence along with Sita.

(*Valmiki*).

8. Story of Valmiki

Thief Ratnakar became Valmiki Rishi. Ratnakar lived in the country of the Kiratas. He was brought up amongst them. He was a Brahmin only by birth. He was always devoted to the practices of a Sudra. He begot many sons through a Sudra woman. He became a thief when he was in the company of thieves. He destroyed many creatures. He always moved about with bow and arrow in hand.

Once he saw the seven Rishis in the forest and ran after them in order to plunder them. The Rishis said, "Why are you following us?" He said to them, "I have come to take away from you what you have. My many sons and wife are starving." I roam about in the hills and forests to maintain them.

The Rishis said to Ratnakar, "Ask your people as follows : 'Will each of you become a sharer in the sins which are committed by me daily?' We shall remain here till you return after settling this point."

"Very well". So saying he went home and asked his sons, wife, mother and father what the Rishis had told him. They said, "All the sins are yours. We shall share only what you bring. Ours are only the gains."

On hearing this Ratnakar became disgusted and went to the place where the Rishis were sitting. His internal nature became purified by the mere sight of those Rishis.

He threw away his bow and arrow, prostrated himself before them and said, "Save me, O Rishis,

I am sinking in the ocean of sin." The Rishis took pity on Ratnakar and said, "Repeat always with a concentrated mind the divine Name Rama-Rama." Ratnakar said, "I am unable to pronounce even that name. Please suggest me some other method." The Rishis said, "If you cannot repeat Rama, Rama then repeat 'Mara, Mara'."

Ratnakar repeated this word with concentrated mind and forgot the outside world. He sat in the same place for a long time. An ant hill accumulated around him.

At the end of a thousand Yugas those Rishis came back. They said to him, "Come out." On hearing this he got up immediately. He came out of the ant hill like the sun out of a mist. The Rishis said, "You are Valmiki because you are born a second time from an ant hill." So saying the Rishis departed.

Thus thief Ratnakar became Rishi Valmiki by his Tapas and repetition of the name of Sri Rama. Even the inverted repetition of syllables raised a thief to the status of divinity. How powerful is Sri Rama's name. Glory to his name.

According to the Adhyatma Ramayana Ratnakar got initiation from the seven Rishis, but according to the Valmiki Ramayana he got the Mantra from Narada. Ratnakar, the great robber was converted into the great saint Valmiki through the touch of Devarishi Narada. Ratnakar tied Narada hand and foot to a tree to prevent him from running away when he went home to ask his father, mother and wife whether they would share his sins. This is another version.

Greatness of Ramayana

The study of Ramayana which is the ancient poem gives happiness to all. Ramayana is worshipped even by Brahma and other principal gods. It bestows on all wealth, health, fame, intelligence, long life, prowess, etc. It gives victory to kings. It cures diseases and helps one to gain good friends.

He who reads or listens to it with faith is freed from his sins committed in a thousand births. He gets progeny. Rama and Sita are highly pleased with that person who reads, hears or writes the Ramayana with devotion. They grant him every prosperity. He gets purity of heart and goes to the supreme abode of Vishnu.

Narada desirous of doing good to the world went during the course of his wanderings to Satyaloka. He prostrated at the lotus feet of Brahma and praised him. Brahma said, "O Devarishi! Do you wish to ask me anything?" Narada said, "O Lord! In Kali Yuga people will not do virtuous deeds. They will do evil actions and tell lies. They will speak evil of others and will covet other's wealth. They will do injury to others and will be attached to other men's wives.

"They will regard the body as their Atma. They will be atheists. They will be endowed with foolish understanding and the intelligence of the brutes. They will cherish hatred towards fathers and mothers and will worship their wives as gods. They will be slaves of lust.

"Brahmins will be greedy. They will live by selling the Vedas. They will only read such sciences as will bring them wealth. They will be proud of their

learning. They will leave the duties of their own order and will cheat others. Kshatriyas and Vaishyas will not follow the injunction of scriptures.

"The Sudras will take to the practices of Brahmins. Women will be unchaste. They will be fearless and treat their husbands with contempt. They will be inimical towards their fathers-in-law and other elders.

"How can beings of this description attain happiness in the life to come? How can people attain salvation? What are the easy means for achieving the final emancipation?"

Brahma said to Narada, "Do thou listen to what I say. By merely reciting Valmiki Ramayana or Adhyatma Ramayana people will attain happiness herein and hereafter. He who reads with devotion even a sloka or half a sloka is purified of all sins that very moment. He who daily recites Ramayana with reverence, faith and concentration is said to be a Jivanmukta or liberated sage. He who worships Ramayana daily with faith and reverence obtains the fruit of an Aswamedha sacrifice. Even he who casually listens to Ramayana from another without reverence is also freed from sin. He who bows to Ramayana obtains the fruit of worshipping all the gods.

"The merit that is obtained by the study of the Vedas or exposition of the Shastras is attained by that person who writes out the whole of Valmiki Ramayana or the Adhyatma Ramayana and gives it to a devotee of Rama.

"He who observes fast on the Ekadasi and expounds Ramayana to an assembly of devotees attains the fruit of the Purascharana of each letter of the Gayatri Mantra.

“ He who observes fast on the Ramanavami day and keeps a vigil at night and recites or hears the Ramayana with concentration of mind attains the same merit which one gets by repeatedly visiting sacred places like Kurukshetra and giving there at the time of the solar eclipse, standing in the water to Brahmins learned like Vyasa as much wealth as he can afford.

“ Even gods with Indra at their head wait to carry out the commands of one who sings Ramayana day and night. He who observes vows and daily reads Ramayana gets the fruit of whatever he does multiplied a crorefold.

“ He who reads the Ramahridaya with a concentrated mind is purified in three days, even if he is a slayer of a Brahmin. He who observes the vow of silence and reads the auspicious Ramahridaya thrice daily in front of the image of Hanuman attains all that he wishes. If one reads Ramahridya circum-ambulating the Tulsi and the Aswatha trees, when he reads each letter, he is absolved from the sin of Brahminicide.

“ Sri Rama churned the ocean of the Upanishads and took out the nectar of the Rama Gita and gave it to Lakshmana. One attains immortality by drinking this nectar.

“ The sin that the Rama Gita does not destroy is not destroyed anywhere in this world by any place sacred or otherwise. If one desires to get himself absolved from the sin of killing a Brahmana, he becomes purified by reading the Rama Gita for only one month. The sin that attaches to the receiving of an improper gift, to eating improper food, to

speaking evil words is annihilated by a single recitation of the Rama Gita.

“ He who reads the Rama Gita in front of the Saligrama image, or near the Tulsi or Aswatha tree or before an assembly of virtuous men attains to that merit which is beyond description. If a man reads Rama Gita with devotion in Sraddha, the forefathers attain to the world of Vishnu.

“ He who observing fast on the Ekadasi day, reads the Rama Gita with a restrained mind at the foot of the Aswatha tree on the Dwadasi day becomes verily Rama himself and is adored by all the gods.

“ One attains to immeasurable merit by merely reciting the Rama Gita even without meditation, without gifts, without bathing in sacred waters.

“ The son of Jamadagni heard Rama Gita recited by Parvati and attained the energy of Lord Hari.

“ All the Smritis and Puranas do not possess a sixteenth of the greatness of Valmiki Ramayana and the Adhyatma Ramayana.”

Introduction

The Ramayana

Salutations to the great sage Valmiki, Lord Rama and other heroes of the Ramayana, and Sri Sita Devi, a remembrance of whom removes all obstacles in life and bestows prosperity, auspiciousness and success in all undertaking.

The Ramayana of Valmiki is perhaps the most ancient and glorious epic in the world. It is known as the Adikavyam, the first poem.

Valmiki Ramayana contains 24,000 slokas which have been grouped into 500 Chapters and that again into seven Khandas or sections *viz.*, Bala, Ayodhya, Aranya, Kiskindha, Sundara, Yuddha and the Uttara Khanda.

Ramayana is a marvellous book which contains the essence of all Vedas and all sacred scriptures. It is a treasure for man. It is a reservoir which contains the nectar of immortality. It delineates the character of a son who kicks off the throne and the pleasures of the senses and the world to fulfil the words of his father and lives in the forest for a period of fourteen years. It depicts the character of a father who sends even his most beloved son in exile in order to keep up his word. It delineates the character of an ideal chaste wife who is devoted to her husband till the end of her life and shares the adversities of her husband and serves him untiringly in the forest, and who also regards her husband as

God. Above all, it also points the character of a brother, who places brotherly affection above everything else in this world and follows his brother in the forest leaving all pleasures of the palace and leading the way to ward off all dangers.

In Sri Rama we find a dutiful son, an ideal husband and King. In Lakshmana we have an ideal brother who shares the joys and sorrows of his eldest brother in city and forest. Can a Hindu wife have a nobler exemplar than the peerless Sita? The very names of these great personages produce a holy thrill in every Hindu heart and in the hearts of all those who read Ramayana.

Ramayana exercises a great moulding power on the life of man. It contains object lessons for husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, friends and enemies.

Ramayana is highly beautiful, melodious and soul-stirring. It contains genuine classical Sanskrit poetry. Rama's young sons, Kusa and Lava, were the first reciters who sang to music this reputed work. It can be easily understood even by boys. It is suitable for beginners in the study of Sanskrit. It contains the highest ideals of Hindu culture and civilisation. It is a text-book of morals for the youths to inspire them to loftier and sublime ideals of conduct and character.

Ramayana is a book that is studied by all—man, woman or boy in India. The teachings of the sacred book are wrought into the very life of every Indian man, woman and boy. Mothers tell the stories to their children, teachers to their students, the old to the young. It is a non-detailed text-book for the students in schools.

The description of nature in Ramayana is most sublime and beautiful. One can actually feel that the hills, the rivers, the trees and the birds are really one with human joys and sorrows. The description of battle scenes is magnificent. The chief characteristic of Ramayana is simplicity. Pathos and tenderness run through the whole poem. Poetry and morality are charmingly united. There is loftiness of moral tone.

Ramayana has an historical basis. It is a book of antiquity. It is not a mere allegoric poem. It is a marvellous inspiring book for all times that has loomed large for centuries over the destinies of millions of people and will certainly continue to do so for ages to come.

Ramayana has also been translated, both in verse and prose, in Italian, French, English and Latin.

The sage Valmiki taught the Ramayana to his little disciples, Lava and Kusa, who were the first to sing it to the world. They came in the garb of ascetics from the hermitage of their teacher and sang the wonderful poem in the presence of their father and the other heroes of the story.

Those who study the Sundara Kanda daily with faith and devotion attain wealth, happiness, prosperity and sons.

Its Origin

Valmiki once asked Narada, "O Venerable Rishi ! Please tell me whether there is a perfect man in this world who is at once virtuous, brave, dutiful, truthful, noble, steadfast in duty and kind to all beings."

Narada replied, "There is such a one, a prince of Ikshwaku's line named Rama. He is virtuous,

brave, gentle and wise. He is a great hero. He loves his subjects immensely. He is the protector of Dharma. He is firm and steadfast. He is just and liberal. He is well-versed in the Vedas and in the science of arms. He is unique in the possession of virtues and matchless in beauty. He is an obedient son, a kind brother, a loving husband, a faithful friend, an ideal king, a merciful enemy and a lover of all living beings. All people adore him."

Valmiki reflecting over this glowing description was walking along the banks of the river Tamasa. He happened to see a pair of Krounchas (birds) sporting with each other in love. Suddenly the male bird was shot dead by a cruel fowler and the female seeing her mate rolling on the ground in the agony of pain screamed out most pitifully her lamentations. The sage felt great pity at the sight of the fallen bird and his grieving spouse and burst forth in the exclamation, "Never, O fowler, shalt thou obtain rest, as thou hast killed a Krouncha in the midst of his love." These words came out spontaneously in the form of a musical verse having four feet of eight syllables each (Anustup metre).

Then Brahma Himself, the creator of the world, appeared before the poet and said, "Sing Rama's charming story in the same melodious metre. As long as this world endures, as long as the stars shine in heaven, so long shall thy song spread among men." So saying Brahma vanished. He inspired the poet with the knowledge of Sri Rama's whole story.

Then Valmiki sat down in meditation and saw every event in Sri Rama's story in detail in his Yogic vision. Then he began to write the Ramayana. The melody of Ramayana was born from a heart of love

and pity for the wounded bird. When applied to Ramayana, the verse of Valmiki sung out of pity for the Krouncha, can be interpreted thus. Sri Rama and Sita represent the two Krounchas. Ravana represents the cruel hunter. Sita was cruelly separated from Rama by the cruel hunter Ravana. There is a slight similarity in both these cases. The hunter's cruel act was a fore-runner to Valmiki's inspiration to narrate the Ramayana.

Its Characters

Sri Rama, the hero of Valmiki's Ramayana is an embodiment of every social and domestic virtue. His sense of filial duty is unparalleled in the history of the world. He was an ideal king and his Government was styled as "Ramarajya", i. e., an ideal or perfect Government. He was an ideal husband and father and a model of domestic virtues.

His adherence to duty was remarkable and illustrious. He even abandoned his wife who was his life, heart and soul to ensure the good of his subjects and sacrificed his personal happiness. He was prepared to sacrifice his very life even to secure the contentment of his people and to stick to his duty. He lived for his people.

He was endowed with inborn humility, noble generosity, forgiveness and largeness of heart. When Lakshmana referred to Rama of the evil plot of Kaikeyi and Manthara he passed it over and was ready to forgive and forget the evil others have done unto him. His fortitude in calamities and adverse conditions was unique and matchless.

The word "Rama" means "he who sports in all beings". "Ramabhadra" means "good Rama".

He is the supreme Purusha from the ideal of truth and duty set by Him.

Some people say, Sri Rama is only an ordinary man. He is not an incarnation of God. He wept bitterly when he lost his wife. His bewailings rent the clouds when Lakshmana fell down on the ground in an unconscious state, being struck with the arrow of Indrajit. Why did Rama the Supreme Being forget his real divine nature? He was sunk in the ocean of sorrow at the ordeal of Sita. If Rama always knew his true Self why did he grieve for the loss of Sita?

The answer to this question is that verily Rama was the supreme Self. He never moved or did anything. He was never subject to joy or sorrow, birth or death, pleasure or pain. Throughout his life Sri Rama behaved like an ordinary man only. He had to do that. Because Ravana had a boon that he could not be killed by Devas, Asuras, Rakshasas, Yakshas, serpents, beasts, etc. He belittled the strength of man in his pride. Ravana could only be killed by a man. So Sri Rama had to show that he was an ordinary man only. Otherwise he would be disqualified for destroying Ravana if Rama exhibited himself to be a God, according to the boon of Brahma.

Sri Rama is known as Maryada Purushottama. He adhered to the injunctions of the Shastras. He led the life of an ideal householder to teach the world the Dharmas of a Grihasta. He never swerved an inch from truth and duty.

The period at which Sri Rama lived was the closing of Treta Yuga. Dwapara Yuga began when he departed from this world.

Sita is the heroine of the Ramayana. She is the noblest flower of Indian womanhood. She is the ideal of womanhood itself. She never led a life of ease and comfort. She was serene and firm amidst sorrows and trials. She was matchless among women. She was subjected to very severe tests in which her purity, courage, patience and other virtues were rigorously tried and she came out nobly successful. She was the Hindu ideal of womanly virtues. She was the most charming picture of feminine excellence. Hindu women are from time immemorial reputed for their disinterested love and self-sacrifice. Sita is a peerless embodiment of these virtues. She never thought of her own happiness and comforts. She lived to serve Sri Rama and make him happy.

Lava and Kusa were the little disciples of Valmiki Rishi. They were brought up under his direct guardianship. They were well versed in the Vedas, music and the science of archery, etc.

Lava was a boy-warrior. He was modest, noble, simple and guileless. He resembled in every respect his father in his features and outward form. He possessed the same voice, the same modesty and the same natural dignity which his father had. He was bold and humble. He had the sense of duty to a high degree. He was endowed with undaunted martial spirit. He could not brook the overbearing attributes of his rival, however great he might be. He paid due respects to elders and Gurus.

Kusa was a worthy elder brother of Lava. The martial fire was burning in him. He also possessed the noble qualities like his brother.

Ravana was a Rakshasa. Though he was a Rakshasa he was a Brahmin. He was a Rakshasa by

Swabhava or nature. Despite his evil qualities he was a great Tapaswin. He was a great Sama-Singer. He propitiated Lord Siva by chanting Sama verses along with the musical instrument whose strings were made out of his own nerves. Asuras and Rakshasas were famous for their Tapas. No one could compete with them in doing rigorous austerities. Hiranyakasipu did Tapas till all his flesh and fat were absorbed.

Ravana obtained a boon from Brahma himself through severe Tapas. The sun could not burn him, nor could the wind blow on him. The mighty ocean dared not stir at his sight. He could not be slain by any being save man. Ravana in his pride did not include men among his opponents.

Although he was cruel, although he did atrocious crimes, yet he went to the abode of Vishnu. This clearly shows that he had earned merits to ascend to Vishnu's heaven and he was a good devotee. Ravana was one of the attendants of Lord Vishnu in Vaikunta. He was cursed by the boy saints, Sanaka, Sananadna, etc. to undergo the miseries of worldly life in the earth plane for three lives as opponent of Vishnu in each of His incarnations. Vishnu is so kind that he bestows immortality even to his bitterest enemies.

Adhyatma and Tulsidas.

The Adhyatma Ramayana consists of 64 chapters and 4,200 verses. It also contains seven Kandas like the Ramayana of Valmiki. It is a part of the Brahmanda Purana. It treats of Bhakti and Gyana. It is a dialogue between Lord Siva and Parvathi on the divinity of Sri Rama.

A devotee who associates his Lord with all auspicious attributes will not listen to any imperfections of his deity. Therefore the Adhyatma Ramayana speaks of the divinity of Sri Rama. Whereas the Ramayana of Valmiki describes Rama as the best of men and tries to show how man despite his weaknesses can rise to the status of divinity by placing before him the noble ideal of Truth and duty as Rama did. Nothing is known of the author of this book.

Tulsidas like the Adhyatma, makes the real Sita enter the fire and an illusory Sita play all the subsequent parts. He says in the Aranya Kanda thus : "After Lakshmana had repaired to the forest to gather roots and fruits Sri Rama said to Sita, 'Listen to me, O Beloved Sita. I am going to play a wonderful act. Enter the fire till I have finished the annihilation of the Rakshasas.' Sita entered the fire and left only an image of herself (Maya Sita), of the same appearance and the same characteristics." Lakshmana was not aware of this great mystery.

When Sita entered the fire after she was abandoned by Rama, both Tulsidas and the Adhyatma say that the illusory Sita only entered the fire. Tulsidas says, "The image and the social disgrace were alone burnt in the fire. No one knew the doings of the Lord. The gods, men and Rishis all remained looking."

The vast majority of people do not study Ramayana with faith and reverence, under great souls. They jump to hasty and unwise conclusions by mere superficial reading of Ramayana here and there. They read the Epic like reading novels with the attitude of curiosity-mongering and cavilling spirit.

That is the reason why they are not able to comprehend the truths, the depths and secrets of Ramayana.

The allegoric meaning of Ramayana is this. Ravana represents Ahamkara or egoism. His ten heads represent the ten senses. The city of Lanka is the nine-gated city of physical body. Vibhishana corresponds to intellect. Sita is peace. Rama is Gyana. To kill the ten-headed Ravana is to kill the egoism and curb the senses. To recover Sita is to attain the peace which the Jiva has lost on account of desires. To attain Gyana is to have Darshan of Rama or the Supreme Self.

He who crosses this ocean of Moha and destroys the Rakshasas, Raga and Dwesha (likes and dislikes), is a Yogi who is united with Santi or peace, ever rests in Atma and enjoys the eternal bliss of the soul or Atman. He is an Atma-Rama.

Sri Rama stands for the "Good" (Sattva) ; Ravana for the "Evil". Sri Rama and Ravana fought with each other. Eventually Sri Rama became victorious. Positive always overcomes the negative. Good always overcomes evil.

SCIENCE OF ASTRAS

This is a divine science. This is Dhanur Veda. Lord Siva, Lord Krishna, Lord Rama are Lords of this supreme celestial science. Parasurama learnt this from Lord Siva. Dronacharya, Kripacharya, Arjuna, Bhishma, Vishwamitra were experts in this science. Bhishma learnt this from Parasurama. Indra also is an adept in this science.

The arrow is charged with the Mantra. It is the Mantra that does all the work. Mark how powerful

is a Mantra. Each Mantra is filled with countless divine potencies. The nature of the work done by an arrow depends upon the Sankalpa of one who sends the arrow. One may aim at the destruction of a particular man or a place. One may protect himself by a cage of arrows.

The sum total of all the bombs of the present day such as incendiary bombs, flashlight bombs, high explosive bombs, chasing bombs and the rest is nothing before a Brahmastra,—or a Pasupatastra or a Narayanastra. These Astras can burn the three worlds. Unfortunately this divine science has become extinct at the present moment.

The Mohanastra will make a man unconscious. Gandharva astra will delude a man. This produces delusion.

Sri Rama sent an Astra on Ravana's party. All Rakshasas appeared as Rama. They killed one another.

Ravana discharged on Rama (Nagastra) arrows that became serpents full of poison. The arrows had their mouths like serpents and vomitted forth fire all round. Then Rama discharged Garudastra. The arrows became Garudas and cut off the serpent arrows on all sides. Garudas are the enemies of serpents. Garudastra nullifies the effect of Nagastra.

Parvatastra gives protection against Vayu Astra. It is like a shield. Sri Rama threw Marichi into the ocean with the Manavastra.

If one throws away his bow and arrow and bows before the Narayana Astra that Astra will not produce any effect. This is called Astra Santi. Withdrawal of Astra is called Astra Upasamhara. Arjuna sent this

Brahmastra on Aswathama and withdrew it together with the Brahmastra discharged by Aswathama who was unable to withdraw it.

The ancient heroes or warriors of India used Astras or weapons of various kinds in the war such as the Nagastra, Agneyastra, Varunastra, Pasupatastra, Vayavyastra, Vajrastra, Gandharwastra, Mohanastra, Indrastra, Garudastra, Narayanastra, Ardhachandrastra, Dewastra, Parvatastra, Manavastra, Vignanastra and Brahmastra. Indrajit directed Nagastra on Lakshmana which made him senseless and bound him. Sri Rama used Brahmastra to kill Ravana. This is the weapon of the highest potency. This is charged with Gayatri Mantra recited in the reverse order. Aswathama and Arjuna used Brahmastra against each other. Even a piece of straw charged with Mantra becomes a powerful weapon. It is the Mantra that does the work. Mark how much power there is in a Mantra ! Varuna Astra is water weapon that will neutralise the effects of Agneyastra, the fire weapon.

General!

One is surprised when he reads in the Ramayana that Sri Rama had an army of monkeys. They begin to question "Why should Rama have an army of monkeys"? Can monkeys talk and do intelligent actions which can be done only by human beings ?

The monkeys were all incarnations of the Devas. Sugriva was an Amsa of Surya. Hanuman was the son of Vayu. Vali was an Amsa of Agni. Nala was an Amsa of Viswakarma.

Once Ravana ridiculed Nandi. He said to Nandi, "your face is like that of a monkey." Nandi pro-

nounced a curse upon Ravana and said, "Your city of Lanka will be burnt and destroyed by monkeys." Therefore the Devas had to take the form of monkeys.

Ramalila is celebrated every year in almost all the principal towns of Upper India in the month of Aswin. It reminds the Hindu of the story of Rama and attracts thousands of people everywhere. If the actors are of good character, the staging of the drama would produce a marvellous influence on the minds of the people.

Generally professional people do this performance with a mercenary spirit. Boys with no character act the part of Rama and Sita. Therefore no influence is produced on the audience. People flock to hear some music and spend the time in some sort of amusement. Good Sannyasins and Sadhus should take part in enacting Rama Lila. Then it would be a blessing to the people.

In Kali Yuga, most of the illiterate persons are devotional and they are all doing some kind of Tapas, Japa, Prayer and meditation. Hindu ladies are devotional through their very nature. The Hindu religion is maintained through the devotional nature of Hindu ladies. Devotion to God is a peculiar characteristic of a Hindu lady. It is only those who have imbibed western education and possess scientific knowledge have become confirmed atheists. They have no faith in chanting Mantra. Their fate is highly deplorable. Justice Woodroffe has written a valuable book entitled "Garland of Letters." There he has treated this subject quite rationally. The only remedy for them to acquire devotion is Satsangh. Satsangh will overhaul their worldly nature, change

their materialistic Samskaras and infuse genuine Bhakti. Hear the famous couplet of Tulasi Das.

“ Bin satsangh viveka na hoi,
Rama Kripa Bin sulab na soi.”

The grace of Rama cannot be obtained without the help of Satsangh and discrimination.

Japa of Rama Mantra is of three kinds *viz.*, mental, low or semiverbal, loud or vocal. The repetition of low Japa gives a reward thousand times more than verbal. The mental Japa gives a reward a crore of times more than verbal.

May the blessings of bow-holder of Ayodhya be upon us all !

Ram, Ram, Ram.

This Essence of Ramayana may be read easily by even the busiest man who finds no time in going through the voluminous original texts. Long details have been condensed nicely in this book.

Glory to that immortal Valmiki, the author of the Ramayana ! Glory to Ramayana, the most sacred book of the world ! Glory to Sri Rama, the hero and Sri Sita, the heroine of this celebrated Epic ! May their blessings be upon you all !

Ananda Kutir,

SWAMI SIVANANDA.

25th July, 1943.

SECTION II

SYNOPSIS

(.of the seven Kandas)

1. Bala Kadam.

Hari Om !!

Rama helps Vishwamitra by guarding his sacrifice. He slays Tataki and Subahu. He frees Ahalya from her curse. He breaks the bow of Siva and marries Janaki and annihilates the pride of Parasurama.

2. Ayodhya Kadam

Preparations are made for installing Rama as heir-apparent. His step-mother Kaikeyi stands in the way and sends him in exile. Raja Dasaratha becomes very much afflicted at heart on account of his separation from Rama and dies on account of grief. Rama, Lakshmana and Sita are entertained by Guha, a hunter-chief. They cross the Ganges and meet the Rishi Bharadwaja. They go to Chitrakoot by the advice of the Rishi. They build a cottage made up of grass and leaves (Parna Kutir) there. Bharata comes and asks Rama to return and take back the administration of his kingdom. Rama refuses. Then Bharata returns and takes Rama's sandals. He places the sandals on the throne and rules the kingdom in the name Sri Rama. He himself lives at Nandigram.

3. Aranya Kadam

Viradha, a giant, attacks them in the Dandaka forest. Rama kills him. Thereafter they pay a visit to the Rishis Sarabhanga, Suteekshna and Atri. Anasuya, wife of Atri, gives an inspiring discourse on the duties of a wife to Sita. Then they meet Rishi Agastya. Rama receives celestial weapons from him. They encounter the giantess Soorpanaka

in the Panchavati forest. She is disfigured by Lakshmana. Lakshmana cuts her nose and ears. Khara and Trisiras, brothers of Soorpanaka, were very much enraged. They fought against Rama and Lakshmana. They were slain in the battle.

Maricha, uncle of Ravana, assumed the form of a golden deer and appeared before them. Sita requests Rama to get the deer for her. Rama proceeds to catch the deer and kills it. Ravana carries away Sita in the absence of Rama and Lakshmana. Jatayu the king of the vultures, challenges Ravana, but he is mortally wounded. Sri Rama obtains all information about Sita from the dying Jatayu. He is very much afflicted at heart. Subsequently Rama and Lakshmana kills Kabandha near the lake Pampa. Then they meet the pious Sabari. She offers them roots and fruits.

4. Kishkindha Kanda

Sri Rama meets Hanuman on the banks of Pampa. They proceed to Mount Rishyamuk and make an alliance with Sugriva. Sugriva kills Vali with the help of Sri Rama. Sugriva is crowned as the king of Kishkindha. Rama consoles Tara.

Thereupon Hanuman with a party of monkeys proceed in search of Sita. He takes with him the ring of Sri Rama as a token. He makes a vigorous search and is not able to find out Sita. Jambavan finds out Sampati, brother of Jatayu, in a cave. Hanuman climbs up the top of a hill by his direction and from there he leaps across the ocean.

5. Sundara Kanda

Mainaka, an island peak, invites Hanuman to rest on his top at the request of the ocean. In his aerial

journey Simhika, a monstress of the ocean, drags him down by catching his shadow. Hanuman kills her.

Then he gets a distant view of Lanka and enters the city at night. He finds out Sita in the Asoka grove. He gives her Rama's token and message. The Rakshasas imprison Hanuman. Hanuman frees himself and sets fire to Lanka. He returns back to the place where Rama is staying and gives Sita's gem to Sri Rama. Sri Rama is highly delighted when he receives Sita's token and her message.

6. Yuddha Kadam

Nala builds a bridge across the sea by the advice of the ocean. The heroes with a large army of monkeys cross the ocean and reach Lanka. Vibhishana joins them and tells them how to destroy Ravana and his army. Kumbhakarna, Indrajit and Ravana are killed in battle. Sita is rescued. Vibhishana is then crowned as king.

Sri Rama, with his party returns to Ayodhya in the flying car called Pushpaka. Rama, is crowned as Emperor. The people of his kingdom feel extremely happy.

Sita's honour is tested in the fire. She comes out more glorious and effulgent than ever.

7. Uttarakanda

Sri Rama's reign is called Rama Rajya. There is righteousness everywhere. Everywhere there are plenty and prosperity. There is neither disease nor sorrow. There are neither dacoits nor thieves. There is no cheating in the markets and shops. There is no adultery. The pilgrims visit safely the sacred places and shrines. Life and property

are quite safe. A purse of gold may be exposed without danger in the midst of a highway.

The four castes duly observe their Dharmas. Sri Rama goes back to His supreme abode (Sakhet Puri or Dhama) after a long and prosperous rule.

SECTION III

THE RAMAYANA

1. Bala Kanda

I

Hari Om !

Ravana oppressed the people very much. The earth assumed the form of a cow and went to Brahma with the Gods and the Munis with tears in her eyes. Brahma went to Hari with the cow, Gods and the Munis and said :—"O Lord ! Ravana the grandson of Pulastya has become proud of the boon—he has acquired from me. He has become a great tyrant. He has become a source of trouble to the three worlds and the protectors. He can only be killed by a man. Do, thou, therefore incarnate as man and kill that enemy of the Gods."

Lord Hari said, "Kasyapa did Tapas. I was pleased with him and granted to him a boon according to which I was to be born as his son. He is now born as Dasaratha. I shall be born as his son through Kausalya on an auspicious day. I shall divide myself into four portions and incarnate separately as such. My Yoga Maya will be born as Sita in the house of Janaka."

So saying Lord Hari vanished. Brahma said to the Gods, "Lord Hari shall incarnate as man in the family of Raghus. You all should incarnate as monkeys and serve Hari."

Brahma consoled the Earth and the Gods and went away to his abode. The Gods then assumed the form of monkeys in the earth. They were waiting for the coming of the Lord Vishnu:

II

Birth of Rama

Salutations to Lord Rama, who is an Avatar of Vishnu, who is measureless, who is of the nature of pure intelligence, and bliss, who is the consort of Sita, master of Sri Hanuman and Lord of the three worlds, who took his birth at his own will to establish righteousness, destroy the wicked and to protect His devotees.

The Gods, the Gandharvas, Siddhas and holy Rishis approached Brahma and said, "O venerable Lord ! the demon Ravana is harassing us in various ways through his power on account of your boon to him. We are not able to check him. Please protect us."

In the meanwhile Lord Hari arrived. He said to the Gods, "O Gods ! Be not afraid. I shall incarnate on earth to protect you all and destroy the wicked Ravana."

Lord Vishnu divided Himself into four portions and chose King Dasaratha for his father.

King Dasaratha who was endowed with good fortune, who was devoted to truth, who was brave and famous was without a son. He was very much troubled in his heart. He approached his family preceptor Vasishta and said, "O My Venerable Master ! I have no issue to carry on the line. I am troubled with the sorrow of being childless."

Vasishta said, "O righteous king ! you will beget four mighty sons. Bring Rishi Sringa, the husband of Santa. Perform at once the sacrifice called the Putreashti."

Dasaratha brought the Rishi to Ayodhya and performed the sacrifice. The God of fire appeared from the fire of the sacrifice. He had a golden vessel full of divine Payasa (rice cooked in milk). He said, "O best of kings ! take this Payasa made by the Gods in heaven. Give it to your worthy wives. You shall beget by them mighty sons."

Dasaratha obtained the permission of Vasishta and Rishi Sringa and gave the Payasa half and half to his queens Kausalya and Kaikeyi. Sumitra also went there. She also wanted to take a portion of the Payasa. Kausalya joyfully gave her half of her share. Kaikeyi also gave her half of her share with immense joy. All the queens became pregnant.

In the tenth month Kausalya gave birth to a son of superhuman form. On the ninth lunar day (of the bright half) of the month of Chaitra under the star Punarvasu, and Lagna Karkata (auspicious zodiacal sign of cancer), with the five constellations in the ascendent, appeared on earth the great and prosperous Sri Rama with mighty arms, the eternal Lord, the Master of the world, the joy of Dasaratha. He bore all the auspicious marks on his fair body. He was wearing a yellow robe. He had four arms. Ear rings were waving in his ears. His form was effulgent like a thousand suns. He wore a crown. He was carrying the conch, the discus, the mace and the lotus. He wore a garland of wild flowers. He wore armlets, anklets and the Srivatsa mark.

Bharata was born to Kaikeyi. Sumitra gave birth to two sons, twins, Lakshmana and Satrugna. At their birth the Gandharvas sang and the Apsaras danced in joy. There was a shower of flowers from above.

King Dasaratha gave to Brahmins a thousand villages, gold, clothes, jewels and cows. He performed the ceremony of Jatakarma (birth ceremony).

Vasishta conferred the names. Kausalya's son was named Rama because he gave joy and happiness to all, because the Munis found in him delight through knowledge in order to cross this ocean of ignorance.

Bharata was so named because he protected all. Lakshmana was so named because he was endowed with auspicious attributes. Satrugna was given that name as he was the destroyer of enemies.

Lakshmana was intensely attached to Sri Rama even from his early infancy. He carried out the wishes of Rama. He never ate anything unless Rama partook of it first. When Rama went out for hunting Lakshmana always followed him with bow in his hand. He could not even sleep without the company of Rama. Lakshmana was like the shadow of Rama. They were inseparable.

Satrugna was highly devoted to Bharata. Both dined together and put on the same dress. Lakshmana was attached to Rama and Satrugna to Bharata according to the portions of the Payasa given to their mother by Kausalya and Kaikeyi respectively.

All the sons were heroic and virtuous. They were well versed in the Vedas. Sri Rama was an expert in archery. They were also very well trained in horsemanship, in encounters with swords and shield, in the warcraft and Kingcraft.

Sri Rama excelled his brothers in bravery and truthfulness. These princes were extremely hand-

some, strong, virtuous, holy and contented, from their very boyhood. They were patient, brave, truthful and firm. They soon captivated the heart of the public.

III

Rama Kills Tataka, Maricha and Subahu.

Once upon a time the Rishi Vishwamitra came to Ayodhya to see Rama. He said to Dasaratha, "I wish to perform a sacrifice but whenever I begin it the Rakshasas, Maricha and Subahu, obstruct it. Give me thy eldest son Rama for the purpose of killing them."

King Dasaratha became anxious. He consulted Vasistha. "If Rama goes away from here I shall not live. What shall I do. If I refuse to give Vishwamitra my son, he will curse me."

Sri Vasistha said, "Hear O King ! Rama is no human being. He is the eternal supreme being. Brahma solicited Vishnu for lessening the burden of the earth. Vishnu is born in thy house from Kausalya. Thou wast formerly Kasyapa Prajapathi, the son of Brahma and Kausalya, Aditi, the mother of the Gods. Both of you did rigorous penance and meditated on Lord Hari. Vishnu was highly pleased and asked you to ask for a boon. You said, "Do thou be my son." Lord Hari said, "Be it so." Verily Vishnu is born as Rama. Lakshmana is Sesha. Bharata and Satrugna are the conch and the discus. The mother of the world, the Yoga Maya, is born as Sita, the daughter of Janaka. Vishwamitra has come to unite her with Rama. This is the mystery of the Gods. Therefore thou shouldst send Rama and Lakshmana with great joy along with Vishwamitra.

Then King Dasaratha asked his two sons to follow Vishwamitra. They started with bows, arrows, quivers and swords. Rama was less than sixteen years in age when he proceeded to kill the Rakshasas. Rishi Vishwamitra taught them on the way the two celestial sciences known as Bala and Atibala. He who knows these sciences is not troubled by hunger and lassitude.

The text of the Mantra is, "Thou shalt not feel tired nor deluded, nor shalt thou be deformed, nor shall Rakshasas attack thee sleeping or under the influence of intoxication. There is no one equal to thee in the three worlds in skill, knowledge, auspiciousness and strength of intellect. There shall be no one equal to thee in giving ready answers to all questions" (Valmiki Ramayana, Balakanda Chapter 22 verses 12 to 14).

Then they crossed the Ganges and came to the forest where Tataka lived. Vishwamitra said to Rama, "Here lives Tataka, a Rakshasi, who can assume various forms at will. She is the wife of Sunda, the son of Jambha. She possesses the strength of thousand elephants. She devastated the two flourishing cities Malada and Karush. Her son is called Maricha. He was born as Rakshasa on account of a curse. She is the terror of men. She has a large mouth and strong arms. Formerly there was a powerful Yaksha named Suketu. He was pure. He practised rigorous penance. Brahma was highly pleased with his Tapas and conferred on him a daughter endowed with the strength of thousand elephants. She is Tataka.

Once Agastya Rishi destroyed Sunda. Tataka with her son ran to devour Agastya. The Rishi

cursed Maricha saying, "Do thou become a Rakshasa." He also cursed Tataka saying, "As you came to devour me, may you become a Rakshasi of terrible form."

"Do Thou, O Valiant Rama, destroy this terrible Rakshasi for the welfare of Brahmanas and cows. You should not shrink from killing her in the interest of the four orders of castes, simply from the consideration that she is a woman. An act may be cruel or sinful and yet it should be done by a ruler in order to protect his subjects. This is the eternal rule of conduct for those who are engaged in ruling a kingdom. In ancient times Indra also killed Manthara, the daughter of Virochana, when she attempted to destroy the world. In days of yore Lord Hari also killed Kavya's mother, the devoted wife of Bhrigu Rishi, when she desired the destruction of Indra at the request of the Asuras. Gods and princes have destroyed many wicked women. Therefore O Rama! kill this wicked woman and abandon your prejudice against killing a woman. Tataka is highly wicked and impious. Kill her before dusk, because the Rakshasas become most terrible when darkness sets in. In the three worlds none but you can dare to kill this wicked and mighty Rakshasi."

Rama replied, "O mighty Rishi: My father has asked me to obey you implicitly in all your commands at the time of coming. Therefore I shall kill Tataka in the interest of all people."

Sri Rama took up his formidable bow and twanged the bow-string. Tataka rushed towards Rama with uplifted arms and thundering roar. She raised a cloud of dust from the ground and began to shower stones on Sri Rama. Lakshmana chopped

off her nose and ears. Thereupon she assumed various forms and began to shower stones. She became invisible. Rama then pierced her chest with arrows and she dropped down dead.

Then she became a very handsome Yaksha woman decked with all ornaments. She was freed from the curse of Agastya by the grace of Rama. She bowed and circumambulated Rama and went to heaven with his permission.

Vishwamitra embraced Rama and taught him the whole of the science of Astra together with all the Mantras.

Vishwamitra started his sacrifice for six days. The hermits told Rama and Lakshmana to protect the forest. Rama and Lakshmana with bows in hand guarded the forest day and night. Maricha and Subahu began to rain clots of blood and bones on the sacrificial altar. Sri Rama hurled at the chest of Maricha the powerful Manavastra which threw him into the ocean. Then he took the Agneyastra and aimed it at the chest of Subahu. Subahu fell dead on the ground.

IV

Deliverance of Ahalya.

Rama then asked, "O Venerable Guru : This hermitage looks like a deserted one. I wish to know all about this." Vishwamitra said, "This hermitage once belonged to the great Muni Gautama. He used to practise austerities here with his wife Ahalya, daughter of Brahma, who was remarkable throughout the world for beauty and devotion to her husband's service.

“ One day when Gautama Muni had gone out of the Ashram, Indra approached her in the guise of Gautama Muni. He visited her and forthwith came out. In the meantime Gautama Muni also returned to the Ashram. He saw Indra coming out of his Ashram disguised as himself. He became very angry and asked him, ‘ O vile wretch ! who art thou who hast assumed my form ? ’ Indra replied, ‘ I am the king of Gods. Do thou save me, the slave of lust. I have committed a highly blamable deed. I am of vile intellect now.’ Gautama Muni pronounced a curse on Indra, ‘ You will become sexless.’ Then he said to Ahalya, ‘ You will live in this hermitage fixed in a slab of stone unseen by others. You will live on air only. You will bear sun, wind, rain and the like. Engage yourself day and night in austerities. Meditate with one-pointed mind on Lord Rama.

‘ When Sri Rama shall visit the Ashram and tread the stone upon which you are fixed, you will be purified from sin. By worshipping Rama with faith and circumambulating him and bowing unto Him, you shall be freed from this curse, you will get back your former form and will serve me happily as before.’

“ Saying so Gautama Muni went to the Himalayas. Since that time Ahalya is sitting in this Ashram, unseen by all creatures, living on air and waiting for the touch of the dust of thy lotus feet. Do thou purify Ahalya, the daughter of Brahma.” Then Rama touched the stone with his feet. Ahalya remembered the words of her husband and worshipped Sri Rama duly with Arghya and the rest. She prostrated herself at the feet of Rama and praised him. She circumambulated Rama and then went to her husband with Sri Rama’s permission.

V

The Marriage of Rama

Then Vishwamitra said to Rama and Lakshmana, "We will now go to Mithila that is ruled by Janaka." They all went to cross the Ganges. The boatman stopped them and said, "O Lord, I shall wash thy lotus feet before thou placest them on the boat. Thy feet have the power of transforming a stone into a woman. I shall take thee to the other shore after washing thy feet. If I allow thee to enter the boat without washing thy feet, this boat will be changed into a woman and I will be deprived of the means of maintaining my family." Saying so he washed the feet of Sri Rama. Thereupon he took them to the other bank of the Ganges.

They all went to Mithila. Janaka paid them due respects. Vishwamitra then introduced Sri Rama and Lakshmana to Janaka and spoke to Janaka all about Rama and his adventures and heroic feats. He said that Sri Rama had come to see the great bow of Lord Shiva which you received from the Gods as a reward of your sacrifice. I have heard that the bow which is worshipped by thee has been seen by many kings. Show that bow to Sri Rama.

Janaka said to his minister. "Bring forthwith the bow of Lord Shiva and show it to Rama."

Five thousand strong men carried the bow. It was adorned with a hundred bells, diamonds and gem. The chief minister showed it to Sri Rama. Sri Rama took hold of it by the left hand and balanced it as if in sport. He then put the string to it and drew it a little with his right hand and broke it in the presence of many kings. The Gods showered flowers

on Rama. Raja Janaka embraced Sri Rama. Then Sita came with a golden necklace, put it on the neck of Sri Rama and went away with great joy.

Raja Janaka asked Vishwamitra to send a letter immediately to Raja Dasaratha to come to Mithila with his sons, wives and ministers for the marriage of the princes. Vishwamitra despatched messengers to Ayodhya at once. Dasaratha ordered his ministers to prepare immediately for going to Mithila.

Thereupon king Dasaratha reached Mithila with his Guru Vasishta and the party.

Then on an auspicious day under an auspicious constellation in an auspicious hour the marriage of Rama with Sita was celebrated. Janaka said, "I give this Sita to thee O Rama ! Do thou be pleased." So saying he placed the hand of Sita over the hand of Rama. He then gave his daughter Urmila to Lakshmana. He also gave Srutakirti and Mandavi, his brother's daughters, to Bharata and Satrugna.

Janaka then related to Vasishta and Vishwamitra the manner of his daughter's birth as related to him by Narada. Janaka said, "Sita appeared in the furrows when the ground for sacrifice was purified by ploughing. I took her for my own daughter and gave her to my wife. Once when I was sitting alone Narada came to me. He said to me, 'Lord Hari has incarnated as Rama for the purpose of showing grace to His devotees and doing the work of the Gods and destroying Ravana. The Yoga Maya is Sita born in thy house. Thou shouldst give Sita to Rama only and to no one else. She is ordained to be the wife of Rama.' So saying he went away. I have looked upon Sita as Lakshmi. I reflected within myself, 'How shall I give Sita to Sri Rama ?' Then I

thought of an expedient. 'This bow which was thrown by Shiva after burning the Tripura has formerly been placed in my grand-father's house. Let this bow be made the stake for the hand of Sita in order to annihilate the pride of all.'

"Through thy grace, O best of Rishis, Sri Rama came here to see the bow. My object of life has been accomplished, when I see Rama sitting on the same seat with Sita."

Janaka praised Sri Rama and gave rich presents to the sons of Dasaratha.

King Dasaratha with his Guru, ministers, sons and Sita started back his journey to Ayodhya with great joy.

VI

Fight with Parasurama

Sri Rama met Parasurama on his way. Parasurama said, "O Rama! If thou art a Kshatriya, have a duel with me. Thou hast broken an old and worn out bow. In vain dost thou boastest of thy strength. I am the destroyer of Kshatriyas. If thou stringest this bow of Vishnu, then I shall have a duel with thee. Otherwise I shall kill all of you."

Sri Rama snatched away the bow of Vishnu from the hand of Parasurama and immediately put a string to it. He took out an arrow from the quiver, put it on the arrow and drew the bow. He said to Parasurama, "O Brahmin! show me a mark to shoot at. My arrow is unfailing. Please tell me which shall I aim at, either all the worlds or thy two feet?"

Sri Parasurama said, "O Rama! I know thee to be the supreme Lord. In my childhood I worshipped Vishnu and did rigorous penance. Lord Hari

said, 'Possessed of divine energy do thou kill Kartavirya who killed thy father and the host of Kshatriyas twentyone times. Having given the whole of the earth to Kasyapa do thou have peace. In the Tretayuga I shall incarnate as Rama and take away the power which I had formerly given to thee.' So saying Lord Hari vanished.

"Salutations unto Thee O Rama ! Thou art Lord Vishnu. The energy that was in me is now placed in Thee. My object in life has been accomplished. O Lord, whatever good actions have been done by me with the object of conquering the world, let them be a mark for Thy arrow—to shoot at. The various higher regions which I have earned through my penance may be cancelled for me. Let me live single-minded in devotion unto Thee alone."

Then Lord Rama said, "O Parasurama ! I am highly pleased with Thee. I shall give you all that thou desirest."

Parasurama said, "Let me always have a firm devotion to Thee. Let me always have the company of those who are devoted to Thee."

"O Lord ! do thou let thy arrow go. I shall go to the Mahendra mountain having destroyed my good and evil Karma through this. There is no shame in my being defeated by Thee, as Thou art the Lord of the three worlds."

Rama then shot the arrow. Parasurama lost all his power. Seeing the destruction by Sri Rama of the regions earned by his penance, the son of Jama-dagni proceeded quickly to Mahendra Mountain.

Thereupon king Dasaratha went to his kingdom with his sons and ministers. The sons of Dasaratha lived happily.

The Lord of all the worlds whose incarnation is for bringing happiness to those who are devoted to Him, who is always associated with Sree, who is without decay, whose power is illimitable, who is self-luminous, eternal and all-pervading and whom Maya cannot overpower, who does all through Maya, who is the ruler of all, whose attributes and glory are only known to the upholders of the world like Brahma and the rest, though appearing to act as a human being, is Rama who lives in Ayodhya in the company of Sita.

2. AYODHYA KANDA.

King Dasaratha said to Vasishtha, "I have become old. The ministers, the citizens, the Rishis, the knowers of Vedas repeatedly praise Rama. Therefore I shall instal Rama as the heir-apparent. Bharata and Satrugna have gone to see their maternal uncle."

He called his chief minister Sumantra and said, "Collect all the things which are necessary for the ceremony. Collect whatever Sri Vasishtha tells you to do. Tomorrow I shall instal Rama as Yuvaraja."

The minister acted in accordance with the commands of the preceptor.

King Dasaratha then asked Sumantra to fetch Rama in his presence. Sri Rama appeared before his father. Then Dasaratha said to Rama, "You are highly qualified and I love you most. You ascend the throne tomorrow."

The friends of Rama informed Kausalya of this glad news. She was highly pleased to hear this happy tidings.

All the highways were swept and watered. All the houses were decorated with flags, garlands, and

festoons. The whole city was anxiously waiting for the morning to witness the coronation ceremony.

Vasishta informed the king that all his directions had been carried out.

Rama fasted with Janaki, controlled his senses and slept on a bed of Kusa grass.

Queen Kaikeyi brought up an orphan girl whom she picked up from her maternal uncle's house. Her name was Manthara. She was the maidservant of Kaikeyi.

Early in the morning Manthara ascended the terrace of the palace to find out the cause of unusual jubilation in the city. She found the streets sprinkled with scented water. She saw temples and houses adorned with flags and festoons. She was eager to know the cause of this great delight of the people. She asked the nurse. "Tell me what is the cause of this great joy of the people? What is the king going to do to-day?"

The nurse informed the hunch-backed Manthara, "Today the king will anoint Rama as Yuvaraja."

The crooked Manthara approached Kaikeyi who was sleeping and said, "Rise, King Dasaratha is going to instal Rama as Yuvaraja. The evil-minded King after sending Bharata to your relations is going to put Rama on the throne in the morning. You will be deprived of all rights and privileges. You will have no freedom. You will have to obey the behests of Kausalya. Claim your right."

Kaikeyi replied, "What shall I do now?"

Manthara said, "Ask the two boons which your husband once promised to you when you served him in the war between the Gods and the Asuras, when he received wounds all over the body. Adopt this trick.

Lie on the bare-ground. Wear a dirty cloth. Pretend to be angry and breathless. To please you the king will give you even his own life. He is very much attached to you. He may even enter the fire for your sake. Tell him to banish Rama in exile for 14 years and instal Bharata on throne. Ask these two boons. Do not accept anything else."

Kaikeyi acted accordingly. Dasaratha said, "O Kaikeyi, what has Rama done to offend thee? Day and night thou always speakest of the good qualities of Sri Rama. Thou hast spoken before 'Looking upon me and Kausalya equally he always serves me.' Let Rama live in the palace. Take thou the sovereignty for thy son. I may even abandon Kausalya or Sumantra or even kingship or my own life itself but I cannot abandon Rama who is highly devoted to me."

The cruel Kaikeyi replied, "Stick to your promise. Be truthful. Truth is the highest Dharma. I will not be satisfied with anything but the banishment of Rama."

Dasaratha said to Sumantra, "I wish to see Rama. Bring him here quickly." Rama came at once and bowed down at his father's feet. Rama enquired Kaikeyi as to the cause of the king's distress.

Kaikeyi said to Rama, "Thou alone art the means of removing the king's distress. There is something to be done by thee for his good. The king gave me two boons. He is ashamed to speak to you. He is bound by the noose of truth. Thou shouldst save him now."

Rama replied. "Why art thou telling me this? I shall give up even my life, jump into the fire or drink poison for the sake of my father. He who does

his father's work without being told is the best of sons. He who does his father's bidding is middling. He who does not do his father's bidding is not a son but refuse of a son. I shall therefore do all that my father tells me to do. Truly, truly, I shall do it. Rama never speaks twice or two contrary things."

Then Kaikeyi said, "The king gave me two boons. Fulfil the king's promise. Save your father. Bharata will rule the kingdom. You must go to the forest in exile for 14 years."

Sri Rama said, "Let Bharata rule the kingdom. I shall go to the Dandaka forest, wearing matted locks and deer skins to keep the promise of the king. For the sake of Bharata, without being asked, I shall gladly abandon Sita, the kingdom, my life and possessions. There is no higher duty to perform than serving one's father and carrying out his word."

Thereupon Sri Rama went to his mother to take permission. He said to his mother. "O venerable mother. Do not sink in distress. Dear father wants to give the kingdom to Bharata and banish me into Dandaka forest in order to keep up his promise to Kaikeyi."

Kausalya fell on the ground in an unconscious state when she heard this heart-rending news. After some time she regained her consciousness. Kausalya said, "O Rama if you were not born I would have been a sonless woman but not subject to severe grief like this. My only sorrow would have been my barrenness."

Lakshmana said, "O Noble mother! Rama being bound by the words of a woman should not abandon his sovereignty and go to the forest. Who can abandon his son who is equal to the gods, dear even

to his enemies ? I am truly attached to my brother. Should Rama enter the fire or the forest, be sure I shall have entered there before him. I shall bind Bharata who is deluded and is under the influence of Kaikeyi and kill his relations and maternal uncles."

Kausalya said, "If thou, O Rama, art truly going to the forest, then take me also. How can I live without thee even for a moment ? Let the king give the kingdom to Bharata, but why does he order thee who art dear to him to go to the forest ? What hast thou done to offend Kaikeyi or the king ? Let him grant boons to Kaikeyi. If thy father is thy master, I thy mother am even greater than him. If he tells thee to go to the forest, I tell thee not to go. I do not give you permission. You should not go to the forest. Without you life is of no use to me. I cannot live among my co-wives. Take me also to the forest."

Sri Rama said, "There is nothing more cruel for a woman than to desert her husband. To attend upon and to serve one's husband is doubtless the highest duty of a woman. So long as a woman lives, her husband is her only Lord or master. The woman who does not serve her husband, shall not do well in the next world, although she practises fasts and other religious rites. But if she serves her husband she attains heaven. Even if a woman has never bowed to the gods and has stopped to worship them, she obtains the highest heaven by serving her husband. A woman should be absorbed in the service of her husband. This is the duty of a woman as prescribed by the Vedas and the Smritis.

I assure, Mother, that I shall come back after fourteen years."

Kausalya found that she could not change the strong determination of Sri Rama. She allowed him to go to the forest and blessed him.

Thereupon he went to see Sita. He told her all that had happened and requested her to serve his mother.

Sita said, "Wife shares the fortune of her husband. I shall accompany you. Thou art my only stay and shelter. I cannot live without thee even for a second. I shall go in front of you and remove the grass and the thorns."

Sri Rama had to yield to the wish of Sita. Then Lakshmana said to Rama, "If you have decided to go to the forest along with Sita, I shall also accompany you to the forest with bow in my hand. I do not want heaven or lordship of all the worlds without Thee, O Rama. I shall go in front of Thee pointing out the path. I shall gather roots and fruits for you and Sita. I will do everything for Thee, when you are awake or asleep."

Sri Rama allowed Lakshmana to follow him to the forest. Then Rama, Lakshmana and Sita went to Dasaratha. Rama said, "On venerable father! I crave your leave. Permit Lakshmana and Sita also to follow me. They do not wish to be left behind. Leave off grief. I shall return after fourteen years." Rama and Lakshmana then made prostrations to Dasaratha and went round him. They all bowed at the feet of Kausalya.

Lakshmana made prostrations to his mother Sumitra. Sumitra said, "O my beloved son! Sri Rama is your refuge. Serve him nicely. Obey his commands implicitly. Consider Rama to be Dasaratha, the daughter of Janaka to be myself and the forest to be Ayodhya. Go forth in happiness."

Sri Rama then spoke to his subjects, "Show to Bharata the love and regard which you have for me in a greater degree. This will please me. Bharata is virtuous. He will do what is pleasing and beneficial to you all."

Sumantra drove the car. Rama, Lakshmana and Sita reached the banks of the Ganges with the Ashram of Sringeri close by.

Then Guha the king of the Nishadas, heard of the arrival of Sri Rama. He was immensely pleased. He speedily came there to meet Rama, his friend and Lord. He brought fruits, honey, flowers, with devotion, placed them before Rama and prostrated himself at His lotus feet. Sri Rama embraced Guha.

Guha said, "O my Lord! Blessed am I today. My birth in this life has become fruitful. I am at Thy service."

Sri Rama said to Sumantra, "Return to the city with thy chariot. Kaikeyi will have the assurance that I have gone to the forest. She will not doubt that my father has told an untruth." Sending away Sumantra Sri Rama with Lakshmana and Sita took his seat in the boat and soon crossed the Ganges. Guha and his people rowed them across the Ganges. Rama slept on a bed of leaves and Kusa grass with Sita. Then Lakshmana and Guha with bow and arrow in hand protected Rama and guarded him from the attack of wild beasts.

Sri Rama embraced Guha, his devotee, and said, "Having lived in the Dandaka forest for 14 years, I shall come back."

He sent Guha away and went to the Ashram of Bharadwaja. Bharadwaja Rishi duly honoured Rama and said, "I have this day reached the goal of my asceticism by meeting Thee. I think Chitrakute which is full of honey, roots and fruits is a pleasant abode for Thee to live in." Thereupon Sri Rama walked on foot with Sita and reached the beautiful Chitrakute mountain where Valmiki had his hermitage. Sri Rama bowed to the Muni. The Muni worshipped Rama with Arghya and the rest.

At the command of Sri Rama, Lakshmana built two cottages. Rama, Sita and Lakshmana lived in the cottages and spent the days quite happily.

Sumantra, the chief minister, came back to Ayodhya, saluted the king and reported the words of Rama, as told by him, "O charioteer! Salute my father. Tell my mother to watch the fire and salute the feet of the king as those of God. Enquire of the welfare of Bharata and tell him to look after the mothers in accordance with justice."

King Dasaratha shed tears profusely when he heard the words of Sumantra as spoken by Rama and gave up his life-breaths uttering, "O Rama, O son, O Sita, O Lakshmana, through separation from Thee I am meeting my death."

The ministers placed the body of Dasaratha in a vessel of oil. Sri Vasishta sent messengers to Bharata who was living with his brother Satrugna in his uncle's (Yudhajit) palace at Rajagriha. The messengers informed Bharata, "Do thou come to Ayodhya at once. A great task has to be done by thee."

Bharata ascended the chariot with his brother and reached Ayodhya. Bharata did not see his

father in the palace. He went to see his mother. Kaikeyi said to his son, "I have obtained the kingdom for you by my boons from the king and I have banished Rama in exile. Rama had gone to the Dandaka forest with Sita and Lakshmana. He will live there for 14 years. Take up the reins of the Government and rule the kingdom happily. Dasaratha, your father reached his life's end on account of grief caused by his separation from Rama."

Bharata became drowned in sorrow when he heard that his father was dead and his brothers had been banished. He rebuked his mother severely. Vasishta then consoled Bharata and said, "Perform in proper time the great funeral rites of the king." Bharata duly performed the rites and the Sraddha on the twelfth day.

The ministers assembled together on the fourteenth day and said, "O Illustrious Bharata of great fame! Become now our king." Bharata said, "Sri Rama, our eldest brother should become the king. I shall live in the forest for 14 years." He said to Sumantra, "Get ready my chariot and bring the army quickly." He started in search of Rama with his mothers, ministers, and others. He reached Chitrakute hill and made prostrations to Sri Rama, Sita and Lakshmana and requested him to come to Ayodhya and ascend the throne.

Sri Rama totally declined to come back to Ayodhya—and take up the reins of Government. Rama replied, "The fire may abandon its heat, ice its coolness, jasmine its fragrance, but I will never break the promise made to my father."

Then Bharata took the sandals of Sri Rama and said, "O venerable brother! For fourteen years

wearing matted hair and bark garments and living on roots and fruits only I will await your arrival, residing in the outskirts of the city. I will entrust the rulership to Thy sandals. If on the day the fourteenth year is completed, I do not see Thee, I will certainly enter the fire."

Sri Rama embraced Bharata and said, " I shall do accordingly. I shall certainly return after the end of fourteen years. I shall give you a definite promise. Protect your mother Kaikeyi."

Thereupon Bharata placed the sandals on his head, came back to Ayodhya. He anointed the sandals, placed his mothers in Ayodhya and lived in Nandigram awaiting the return of Sri Rama. He administered the kingdom under the control of the sandals.

Thereupon Sri Rama left Chitrakute and went to the Ashram of Atri. Sri Rama made prostrations to Atri Rishi. The Rishi also welcomed Rama with due respects. Sita met Atri's wife Anasuya who was well versed in Dharma. Anasuya made a present of clothes, flower, garland, unguents to Sita.

Then Atri pointed out to Sri Rama, "This is the path of the great sages who bring fruits from the forest. O Rama! you will be able to enter the deep forest by this path."

3. ARANYA KANDA

I

Destruction of Viradha

When Rama entered the Dandaka forest he saw the hermitages of ascetics. The ascetics paid due respects to Sri Rama and offered fruits, flowers, roots and water.

Sri Rama found a terrible Rakshasa in the forest named Viradha. The Rakshasa rushed at Rama, Lakshmana and Sita. Rama cut off his arms and feet with his arrows. The Rakshasa fell down and said, "I am about to die. I could not recognise you first that you are Rama, son of Dasaratha. I am son of Yava. My mother is Shataprada. My name is Viradha. I did penance and pleased Brahma. I am powerful. I have got this terrible form of a Rakshasa through a curse. My name is Tumburu and I am a Gandharva. I once offended Kubera by my absence on account of my attachment for Rambha. He then pronounced a curse on me. I made entreaties. He blessed me saying, 'You will get your former state of a Yaksha when Sri Rama kills you in battle'. My Lord I have been absolved from that curse through Thy grace. One and a half Yojana from this place there lives a pious hermit named Sarabhanga. He will do you good. Do thou go to him soon."

Then from the body of Viradha emerged a beautiful being. He prostrated before Sri Rama and went back to his original abode.

Sita said, " My venerable Lord ! You should not kill the Rakshasas dwelling in Dandaka without provocation. I feel anxious on account of you. I do not wish that you should go to the Dandaka forest. If you visit that place you will surely fight with the Rakshasas. You are truthful. You have control over the senses. You are firm in your vows. You are obedient to your father. But you kill a creature without any offence. It is not right to kill any creature unless it does some serious harm. Where are arms, where is the forest ? Where is penance and where is the duty of a Kshatriya ? These are opposed to each other. You should lead a life of a hermit here. You can resume the duties of a Kshatriya—after your return to Ayodhya. My Lord ! You know everything."

Sri Rama said, " The ascetics of Dandaka forest are in great distress. They have requested me to protect them. I have promised them protection. I cannot abandon the promise as long as I live. I would rather give up my life, even you and Lakshmana than abandon the promise made by me, especially to Brahmins. I should protect the hermits even if they do not request me. It is my duty."

II

Meeting of Sarabhanga and Sutikshana

After the destruction of Viradha, Sri Rama and Lakshmana proceeded towards the hermitage of Sarabhanga. The sage worshipped them with due honours and gave fruits, roots and the rest. He said to Sri Rama, " I have for a long time been living here devoted to asceticism. I have been longing to see Thee, O Rama. Today my penance has borne

fruit. Whatever merit I have acquired that I dedicate to Thee. I shall thereby attain salvation." He made prostrations to Sri Rama and said, "I shall now repair to Brahmaloaka." He entered the fire.

All the Munis who lived in the Dandaka forest came to see Rama. They paid due respects to the Lord. Rama saw everywhere lying on the ground numerous heads and bones and said to the Munis, "Whose bones are these? Why are they lying here?" The Munis replied, "These are the heads of the Rishis who have been eaten by the Rakshasas when they were deeply immersed in Samadhi. The Rakshasas are waiting for an opportunity to attack the Rishis. They are all roaming about here. Therefore O Rama! thou should remove the troubles of the Rishis."

On hearing these words of the Munis Sri Rama made a vow to kill all the Rakshasas.

Thereupon Sri Rama went to the well-known Ashram of Sutikshana, the disciple of Agastya. Sutikshana was always devoted to the worship of Rama. He came out and worshipped Rama according to rites. Sri Rama blessed Sutikshana and then proceeded to the Ashram of sage Agastya.

III

In the Ashram of Agastya

The sage Agastya paid due honour to Sri Rama, Sita and Lakshmana and said, "I have been living here waiting for thy coming. Today all my sacrifices have become successful. My penance has borne fruit today." Then the sage Agastya gave him the bow which had in days of yore been placed under his care

by Indra. He also gave him inexhaustible arrows in quivers together with a sword studded with diamonds and said, "Do thou, O Rama, kill with these the hosts of Rakshasas who have become the burden of the earth and fulfil the purpose for which thou hast taken a human form under the influence of Maya. Two Yojanas from this place, there is a beautiful spot known as Panchavati on the banks of the river Godavari which abounds in fruits, roots, water and the rest. There, O Rama, thou shouldst pass the rest of the days."

Thereupon Sri Rama made salutations to the Rishi and went by the route pointed out by him.

IV

In the Panchavati

Sri Rama met on the way a big vulture. He took it for a Rakshasa and wanted to kill it with his arrow. The king of the vultures said, "O Rama ! I do not deserve to be killed by Thee. I am thy father's dear friend Jatayu, the son of Syeni. I live in Panchavati. I am desirous of doing good to Thee. I shall certainly do thee good. When some time or other thou art gone on hunting along with Lakshmana I shall protect with care Sita."

Sri Rama said to Jatayu with affection. "O king of vultures ! Live in this forest and do what is good for me."

Then Sri Rama went to Panchavati and commanded Lakshmana to construct a hermitage. Lakshmana immediately carried out the behests of Sri Rama.

A Rakshasa woman came to the spot where Sri Rama lived. She said to Rama, "Why have you come to this place with your wife which is inhabited by Rakshasas? I am a demoness Surpanakha by name. I can assume any form at my will. I am the sister of Ravana. Here I live in the forest with my brother Khara. The king Ravana has given this place to me. Here I live eating the Munis. Become my husband."

Sri Rama said to Lakshmana, "Disfigure this ugly, unchaste, haughty demoness." Lakshmana drew out the sword and cut off her ears and nose.

Thereupon she uttered a terrible roar and went to her brother Khara with her body drenched with blood. Khara asked, "O sister! who has disfigured you thus? I shall this very moment kill him." Surpanaka replied, "Rama together with Sita and Lakshmana is living on the banks of the Godavari. His brother has by his command done me this. Brother! kill those two men."

Khara said, "I shall drink their blood and eat those two men." He speedily proceeded with Dushana and fourteen thousand Rakshasas of great strength. They all attacked Rama with various kinds of weapons. All the Rakshasas were killed by Rama within one and a half Muhurtas.

Thereupon Surpanaka went to Lanka, entered the the assembly hall of Ravana and fell down crying at his feet. Ravana said to his sister, "Rise up! who has disfigured you? I shall burn him up in a moment."

Surpanaka said, "You have no spies. You are surrounded by vulgar ministers. You are addicted to vulgar pleasures. You do not know the massacre

of your own people at Janasthana. Khara, Dushana and fourteen thousand Rakshasas have been killed by Rama in an instant. He has made the whole of Janasthana devoid of fear for the Munis,

Ravana asked "who is this Rama? Why and how has he killed the Rakshasas. Tell me everything in detail. I shall destroy him immediately."

Surpanaka said, "One day I went to the banks of the Godavari from Janasthana. I saw Rama in Panchavati with bow and arrow in hand and wearing matted locks and barks of trees. His younger brother Lakshmana is like him. His wife Sita is extremely handsome. Neither amongst the Gods, nor amongst the Gandharvas, nor amongst the Nāgas, nor amongst men, have I seen or heard of one like her. I attempted to bring her in order to make her your wife—but Lakshmana cut off my nose and ears at the command of Rama. Then I went to Khara crying in distress. He repaired to fight against Rama with Dushana and fourteen thousand Rakshasas. Those Rakshasas were killed in a moment by Rama. If Sita becomes your wife your life will be fruitful on this earth. Take her away forcibly and make her your wife. You are not capable of standing before Rama. Try to obtain her by beguiling him."

Then Ravana went to Maricha and spoke these words, "O my beloved Maricha! Khara, Dushana and fourteen thousand Rakshasas have been killed by Rama in Janasthana even though they did not do him any wrong. My sister Surpanaka has been disfigured by Lakshmana. Therefore I shall, during his absence in the forest, take away his wife dearer

to him than life itself with your assistance. Help me in this."

Hearing these words of Ravana, Maricha who was highly wise replied to the king of Rakshasas, "The action which you are going to do will destroy thee to the very root. Persons who speak always that which is pleasing are quite common. But those who speak that which is not pleasing are indeed very very rare and those who will hear it are also rare too."

I know the prowess of Sri Rama. He came to protect the sacrifice of Vishwamitra when he was only a boy of sixteen years old. He hurled me to the distance of a hundred Yojanas into the ocean by one shot of an arrow. Since then I have taken refuge in this place which is free from the fear of Rama. I am aware of his valour and strength. He is of noble character. He is the king of the whole world. Those names Raja, Ratna, Ratha, and those that begin with 'Ra' produce fear in me, because they carry the initial letter of Rama's name. I dream of Rama only in my sleep. Give up all hostile intentions against Rama and go home. To attempt to take away another's wife is the greatest sin. You have already thousands of wives. Be true to your own wives only. Save your family. Serve Rama with intense devotion. Leave off enmity towards Rama. My advice is for your good only. Accept it. Rama is no human being. He is Lord Hari himself. I heard all this from Narada. He has come into this world for lightening the burden of the earth through His own Maya."

Ravana said, "You should speak with great respect to a king. But you are uttering harsh words with disrespect owing to your wickedness. I have

determined to take away Sita by force. No one can change my firm resolve. I do not want you to tell me about Dharma and Adharma. Rama is the supreme Lord and has come upon this earth at the solicitation of Brahma with a human form in order to kill me. He will surely do this. I shall surely find out means for taking Sita from Rama. I shall attain to the supreme abode if I am to be killed by Rama."

"Become a wonderful golden deer. Move about in front of Sita. She will say to Rama, 'Bring the deer speedily.' When Rama is at a distance from Sita, cry out in a voice similar to that of Rama, 'Ah Sita, Ah Lakshmana.' O Maricha, if you do not do this, I will kill you now at this very moment."

Hearing the words of Ravana, Maricha reflected within himself, "If Rama kills me I shall be released from this ocean of worldly life. I shall attain the supreme abode by death from his hands. If this vile wretch kills me I shall surely go to hell." Having thus resolved to die at the hands of Rama, Maricha said to Ravana, "O Lord: I shall carry out thy command."

V

The Illusive Deer

Maricha then assumed the form of a deer of the colour of pure gold with silver spots. His horns were studded with jewels and his feet with costly gems. His eyes were of blue stone and his lustre was like that of lightning. He wandered about near the door of Rama's hermitage and allured Sita.

Sita saw the beautiful deer. She said to Rama, "Do thou give it to me. It will be my plaything.

When we return to our kingdom it will be an ornament to our palace. Bharata and the mothers-in-law will like it immensely."

Lakshmana said, "O Lord : There cannot be on earth a deer like this which is filled with jewels. This is verily an illusion. That Rakshasa Maricha is playing a foul trick to allure Sita. There is no doubt in this."

Sri Rama said, "O Lakshmana : Do thou carefully protect Sita who is dearer to me than life itself. There are many terrible Rakshasas in this forest. If he is Maricha I shall kill him. If it is a deer I shall bring it in order to please Sita." Sri Rama took his bow and arrow and went after the illusive deer.

Maricha drew away Rama a long distance from his cottage by being visible and invisible. Rama realising that he was a Rakshasa pierced him with an arrow. Then Maricha appeared in his usual form and fell on the ground bleeding from the mouth. Maricha cried out in a voice similar to that of Rama, "I am dying Ah Sita, Ah Lakshmana" and gave up his life-breaths.

Sri Rama thought, "This vile Rakshasa imitated my voice uttering 'I am dying, O Lakshmana, O Site.' Sita will be much agitated in her heart. She will think that I am dead. Therefore I must return to my hermitage quickly." Sri Rama was returning to his hermitage.

Sita on hearing that cry of Maricha got terrified. She said to Lakshmana "Go at once, O Lakshmana. Thy brother is troubled by the Rakshasa. Dost thou not hear his cry of 'O Lakshmana.' Lakshmana said, "O Mother : This could not be the cry of

Rama. It was the cry of the Rakshasa as he was dying. Rama can destroy in a moment the three worlds, how can he who is adored by the gods cry piteously." Lakshmana remembered his brother's command. Therefore he did not go.

Sita became angry and said, "Wretch : dost thou wish evil to thy brother. Do you for the sake of me wish that Rama should die. Do you wish to carry me off on his departure ? Thou shalt not have me. I shall give up my life this moment. How could I desire any other person after having obtained for my husband Rama ? Rama does not know thee to be like this, intent upon abducting his wife. I shall not touch any one else except Rama."

Sri Lakshmana was touched by the harsh speech or wordy shafts of Sita. He said to her, "I cannot bear such harsh words which are like molten lead in my ears. You are indeed a goddess to me. Improper speech is common in women. This is their very nature. Women are fickle, cruel and unrighteous. They always create dissensions and splits." So saying Lakshmana slowly went towards Rama.

VI

Abduction of Sita

Finding the splendid opportunity Ravana in the guise of a mendicant went to Sita with his staff and bowl. Sita bowed to him and gave him fruits, roots and the like. The mendicant said, "O Lady : who are you ? Who is your husband ? Why do you live in this forest, which is inhabited by Rakshasas ? Tell me all this. I shall tell you my story."

Sita said, "I am the wife of Rama, son of King Dasaratha. I am called Sita, the daughter-

of Janaka. With his father's permission he has come to live in this forest for 14 years. I wish to know thee. Do thou tell me about thyself."

The mendicant replied, "I am Ravana, the grandson of Pulastya, the Lord of the Rakshasas. I am the step-brother of Vaisravana (Kubera). I have come here to carry you to my city. I am a worthy husband to you. Leave off this sorrowful life in the jungle. Give up your love for an ordinary man. What will you do with Rama who is living like a Muni?"

Sita said, "If you say this to me, you will be killed by Rama of great valour and prowess." Then tearing the earth with his nails and lifting Sita together with the portion of earth that supported her in his arms, Ravana threw her into his car and quickly travelled in the sky. Sita cried out "O Rama ! O Lakshmana."

Jatayu, the king of the vultures, rose in the sky and fought against Ravana. Ravana took up the Chandrahasa sword given to him by Lord Siva and cut off the wings of the bird. Jatayu fell on the ground almost dead.

Sita saw five monkeys sitting on a hill. She took off half of her upper garment and her jewels, tied them in a bundle and threw it on the hill. She thought that the monkeys would inform Rama about it.

Ravana crossed the ocean and reached Lanka. He placed Sita in the Asokavana in the palace surrounded by Rakshasa women.

Rama killed Maricha and returned hastily along the path. Within a short distance Sri Rama met Lakshmana and said to him. "Why have you come

here leaving Sita ? You have done an unwise act and have disobeyed my order. I am not pleased with you."

Lakshmana repeated the harsh words of Sita. Rama replied, "you have taken the words of a woman to be true and acted unwisely indeed."

Sri Rama quickly went towards his hermitage. As he did not find Sita there, he wept in great sorrow. Sri Rama appeared to be attached to things of the world, to those of foolish understanding, but not to those who knew the truth.

VII

Rama meets Jatayu.

Sri Rama searched for Sita all over the forest but could not find her. Then he saw Jatayu. Seeing him Rama said, "This creature has devoured Sita. I shall kill this Rakshasa." Jatayu said, "Do not kill me. I am the friend of your noble father. I am Jatayu. I had a fight with Ravana to protect Sita when he was carrying her on the car in the sky, towards the south. He cut off my two wings." On hearing these words of Jatayu, Sri Rama was much moved with affection and tenderness. Jatayu gave up his life-breaths in the presence of Sri Rama. Sri Rama performed the funeral rites of Jatayu and blessed him. Jatayu attained the supreme abode of Rama.

VIII

Release of Kabandha.

Thereupon Sri Rama went to another forest and began to search for Sita. He came across a wonderful Rakshasa of a peculiar shape with a face on

the chest. His arms extended for one Yojana. Both Rama and Lakshmana fell into his arms. Rama cut off his right arm and Lakshmana his left arm.

Kabandha said, "who are you ? Are you the Gods in the heaven ?" Then Rama said, "I am Rama, son of Dasaratha. Lakshmana is my brother. As you have enveloped us we have both cut off your arms. Who are you ?"

Kabandha said, "Blessed am I, if thou art Rama. Formerly I was the king of the Gandharvas. I was proud of my youth and beauty. I was roaming about the world with beautiful women. I had obtained from Brahma the boon of indestructibility through penance. Once upon a time I laughed when I saw the sage Ashtavakra. He became angry and pronounced a curse upon me, 'Do thou become a Rakshasa.' Then I beseeched him to free me from this curse. He said, 'In the Treta Yuga Lord Hari will incarnate as Rama, the son of Dasaratha. Your arms will be cut off by him. Then you will be released of this curse and you will assume your original form.' "

"At one time I ran after Indra. He struck me on my head. Then my head fell on my chest and my feet also went into my sides. Even though I was beaten by his thunderbolt I did not die on account of the boon given by Brahma. The Gods pitied me and said, 'How can he live without a mouth ?' Then Indra said, 'His mouth shall be in his chest. His arms will extend for a Yojana.'

Then Kabandha praised Sri Rama. Rama said, " O Deva Gandharva, I am pleased with your devotion and hymn of praise. Do thou go to heaven now."

IX

Meeting of Sabari.

Kabandha, the king of the Gandharvas, said to Rama when he was going to heaven, "O Lord! There is the Ashram of Sabari in front of Thee. She is awaiting Thy coming. Go to her. She would tell Thee all about Sita."

Rama and Lakshmana passed through a beautiful forest and approached the Ashram of Sabari.

Sabari was immensely pleased when she saw Rama and Lakshmana. She immediately rose from her seat with folded hands. She bowed to them with eyes full of tears of joy. She welcomed them and made them sit on her own seat. She washed their feet with intense devotion and sprinkled that water over her body. She worshipped them according to rules.

She worshipped His feet with flowers. She then gave to Rama with devotion the fruits which she had collected for him.

Sabari said, "O Venerable Lord! My Gurus lived in this Ashram. I stayed here and served them. They told me to live here. They said to me, "Sri Rama will come here. Practise meditation here till he arrives. On seeing Rama and burning this body, you will go to the supreme abode of bliss." O Lord! I am meditating on Thee as directed by my Gurus."

Rama then said, "O Venerable Lady! Have you conquered all the obstacles that stand in the way of penance? Have you controlled your anger? Do you practise control over food? Do you enjoy peace and bliss?"

The aged Sabari said, "O Lord! I have seen Thee today. A sight of Thee was unattainable even by my Gurus. I feel that my penance has attained its consummation. Blessed is my birth. I shall surely attain Thy eternal abode by Thy grace. Be Thou gracious unto me."

Rama said, "Neither by sacrifices nor by the study of the Vedas and the like can I be seen by those who are devoid of devotion to Me. The fact of being a man or woman or belonging to a particular caste or order is no qualification. In My worship the only qualification is devotion or pure love."

"O good woman: I shall tell thee in brief the requirements of devotion or pure love unto Me. The first requirement is the company of the saints (Satsangh). The second is recitation of deeds, or Lilas. The third is singing of My attributes. The fourth is the exposition of My sayings, also constant service of one's preceptor without cunningness or crookedness, hypocrisy, knowing him to be my own Self. The fifth is the possession of a charitable nature and practice of the Yama (Self-restraint) and Niyama (religious observances). The sixth is constant worship of Me. The seventh is meditation with recitation of Mantras. Worship of my devotees who are to Me greater than my own Self, regarding all as my own Self, non-attachment to objects and control of the internal and external organs come under the seventh method. The eighth and the ninth are meditation of my Nature. These are the nine kinds of devotion.

"Devotion arises through these means. When one develops devotion he attains realisation of my own Self. He who has realised my own Self attains the

final beautitude or Moksha in this very life. It is an established fact that devotion is the means for salvation. He who has got the first of the means, viz., Satsangh or association with the saints attains devotion and gradual emancipation. There is no doubt of this,

"You have got sincere devotion to Me. Therefore I have come to you. There is salvation for you on account of my Darshan. There is no doubt of this. If you know, tell me where My beloved Sita is, and who has carried her away."

Sabari replied, "O Lord! Thou knowest everything. Thou art omniscient and yet Thou askest this of me following the ways of the world like an ordinary man. I shall tell Thee where Sita is. Ravana has carried her away. She is now in Lanka. In the vicinity there is the beautiful lake of Pampa. Adjoining the lake is the great hill known as Rishyamuka. Sugriva lives there in great fear with his four counselors. He is afraid of Vali, his brother. Vali does not dare to come to the Rishyamuka mountain on account of the curse of Matanga Rishi. He will die instantly if he goes there. Vali threw the dead Asura Dundubhi. Drops of blood from Dundubhi's mouth fell on the hermitage of Matanga. Therefore the Rishi pronounced a curse upon Vali.

"O Lord! do thou go there and make friendship with him. He will do everything for thee. He is endowed with unmeasurable prowess. Now I shall enter the fire in Thy presence."

The aged Sabari entered the fire and rose from the flame with an effulgent body with celestial ornaments, garland and dress and illumined the place by the halo of her glory. She attained through the grace of Sri

Rama the abode of eternal bliss. Though she was of low birth she obtained the final emancipation through the grace of Lord Rama. What is there that is difficult of attainment when one gets divine grace.

Devotion to Sri Rama confers immortality and bliss. Therefore recite His name. Sing His glory. Serve his feet. Enthroned in your heart Sri Rama of dark hue whose image is reflected in the heart of Lord Siva.

4. KISKINDHA KANDA

I

Meeting of Sugriva

Then Rama together with Lakshmana slowly approached the banks of the Pampa Lake which was full of lotuses, water-lilies. Rama lamented very much over the loss of Sita. He said to himself, "what shall I say to King Janaka when he asks me about the welfare of Sita in the midst of his people? What shall I say to my mother Kausalya if she asks me at Ayodhya, 'Where is my noble daughter-in-law? And how is she?' "

Lakshmana said, "O revered brother. Control yourself. Do not give way to grief. Hope is indeed very powerful. There is nothing unattainable in this world for one who is endowed with hope. We shall certainly bring back Sita. My Lord! be hopeful. Abandon grief."

Sri Rama became very courageous when he heard the encouraging words of Lakshmana. Sri Rama drank some water. This removed his fatigue. He walked with Lakshmana over the pleasant road on the banks of the lake. When Rama and Lakshmana were going by the side of Rishyamuka hill, bow and arrow in hand, Sugriva became suspicious.

Sugriva said to Hanuman: "Who are these brave men? Put on the guise of a Brahmacharin and find out who they are. Have they been sent by Vali to

kill me. Find out their intentions. Know their minds. If they are of evil hearts, make a sign to me by the hand. Ascertain the truth."

Hanuman went to Sri Rama, prostrated himself before him and said "Why are you here in this region? What is your object in roaming in this forest? I am Hanuman, the minister of Sugriva, the king of monkeys. I am the son of Vayu, the wind-God. Sugriva is in distress. He is the younger brother of Vali. He has been deceived by his brother Vali. Vali has taken away his younger brother's wife, Ruma. He has been turned out of his kingdom."

Sri Rama said to Hanuman, "O Hanuman! O mighty-warrior, I am Rama, the son of Dasaratha. This is my brother, Lakshmana. By the command of my father I came and lived in the Dandaka forest together with Sita. There some Rakshasa took away my wife. We have come here in search of her."

Hanuman said, "Sugriva is living now on the Rishyamuka hill being afraid of Vali. It is proper that thou shouldst make friendship with Sugriva. He shall help thee in killing that Rakshasa who has abducted Thy Sita. We shall go just now if it so pleases thee."

Sri Rama said, "O mighty and learned Hanuman! I have come here to make friendship with him. I shall undoubtedly do any work for my friend."

Thereupon Hanuman took his own form and said to Rama, "Mount on my shoulders. We shall go up the hill." Rama and Lakshmana mounted on the shoulders of Hanuman. Hanuman flew in the sky and reached the top of the hill in an instant.

Hanuman then went up to Sugriva and said, "O King ! Abandon all fear. Rama and Lakshmana have come. Get up. I have arranged for Rama's friendship with you. Make fire as your witness and make friendship with him." Then Sugriva came to see them with intense joy. Lakshmana related to Sugriva the whole of Rama's story. Sugriva said to Rama, "O Lord ! I shall go in search of Sita. I shall also help thee in killing the enemy." He said to Rama, "O Lord ! I shall tell thee something that I had seen. Some time back I was sitting on the top of the hill with my ministers. I saw a handsome woman being carried through the sky by some one. She was crying and uttering 'Rama, Rama'. She saw us sitting on the top of the hill, removed her ornaments, put them in a cloth and looking at us, threw them down. Thou shalt see them just now. Here are those ornaments, my Lord. Kindly know whether they are thine or not." Sugriva brought them and showed them to Rama.

Sri Rama removed the cloth and saw the ornaments of Sita. He repeatedly said, "O Sita." He placed them on his heart and wept like an ordinary person.

Rama said, "O Lakshmana ! do you recognise her ornaments?" Lakshmana replied, 'Brother, I cannot identify her bracelets and her ear-ornaments, but I can recognise her anklets as I have constantly saluted her feet.'

Then Lakshmana consoled his brother and said, "O Rama ! The Rakshasas who took away Sita will be soon killed in battle with the help of Sugriva and Janaki will be restored to thee speedily. Rest assured of this, my Lord."

Sugriva also said, "O Lord Rama ! I promise to thee that I will kill Ravana and give Thee Sita."

Hanuman then lighted a fire close by. Rama and Sugriva making the fire their witness, extended their arms and embraced each other. Then Sugriva sat close to Lord Rama and related his story to him.

Sugriva said, "O friend ! Hear the story of what Vali has done to me. Vali is my elder brother. I honoured him. He ruled over the vast ancestral kingdom. I obeyed him like a servant. There was a terrible Asura named Mayavi. He was the son of Dundubhi Danava. Formerly Vali incurred his enmity on account of a woman. One night Mayavi appeared at the gate of Kishkindha and challenged Vali to fight. He made a terrible roar. Vali came out and marched towards the Asura in wrath. I also followed him. Mayavi began to run away in fear. We chased him. Then the Asura entered a spacious and impregnable abyss."

Vali said to me, "Sugriva ! stand cautiously at the mouth of this cave till I return. I will enter inside and kill the Asura. One year passed. I found warm blood coming out of that hole. I heard the noise of the Asuras but I did not hear the voice of Vali. I thought that Vali had been killed.

"From all these signs I naturally concluded that Vali was dead and I closed the mouth of the abyss. I performed the Tarpan rites and came back to Kishkindha. I kept all these about Vali secret but afterwards the ministers somehow came to know of that. They made me king forcibly much against my will.

"I was ruling over the kingdom for some time. Vali returned after killing his enemy. When he saw that I was installed on the throne he became very furious. He spoke to me very harsh words. I greeted him with due honours when he entered the palace. I placed my crown at his feet and bowed at his feet. But still he was in great wrath. He did not show any cheerful countenance.

"I narrated to my brother all that had happened and asked his pardon." I told him also, "You are my adorable king and I am your obedient servant as before. Your kingdom was entrusted to me as a trust and I protected it as such. The councillors and the subjects forcibly put me on the throne, because the kingdom was without a ruler. A kingdom without a ruler will come to destruction. Therefore I ruled the kingdom to maintain peace and order."

Vali abused me. He said in the presence of his ministers and citizens, "I entered the cave to kill Mayavi and asked Sugriva to remain at the entrance till I came. It took me one year to search him. I killed him and tried to come out of the cave. I repeatedly called aloud 'Sugriva, Sugriva'. I did not get any answer. I was very much afflicted in my heart. Then I began to kick at the door again and again. At last the stone gave way. Then I came out of the cave slowly. Sugriva forgot all brotherly affection and shut me in the cave."

"O friend Rama ! Vali, saying thus, turned me out with a single piece of cloth on me. He took my wife also. I roamed over the world on account of his fear. I was very much troubled at my heart owing to the loss of my wife Ruma. Now I have taken shelter in

this Rishyamuka hill, because Vali cannot come here on account of the curse of Matanga Rishi." My friend, I have now told you everything about the cause of our enmity. I am quite innocent. Show me thy favour and remove the cause of my fear. Sri Rama said, "I shall soon kill thy enemy, the ravisher of thy wife. You will soon get back your kingdom and wife. Be not troubled at heart. I can well feel that you are drowned in the ocean of sorrow on account of the cruelty of your brother Vali. I will speedily get you out of it."

II

Death of Vali

Sri Rama asked Sugriva to challenge Vali to battle. Sugriva went forthwith to the outskirts of Kiskindha and roared like a lion. Vali came out. Sugriva struck Vali on the chest. Vali struck Sugriva with his fists. Then Sugriva vomitted blood and ran away. He came to Rama and said, "You made a promise to help me and kill Vali. Why does thou O Rama, abandon me ? You asked me to challenge Vali to a fight. I cannot understand your conduct."

Rama then consoled Sugriva and said, "My friend ! Hear me why I did not shoot my arrow. Both you and Vali looked just the same by your statures, dress, voice, movement, colour, look and valour. Therefore I could not shoot my arrow. Go now and again fight a duel without any fear. I shall now make a distinguishng mark for you."

Rama said to Lakshmana "Tie a garland of flowers round the neck of Sugriva." Lakshmana acted accordingly.

Thereupon Sugriva made a dreadful roar and called Vali to fight. Vali heard the roar and came to fight with Sugriva. Tara, wife of Vali, prohibited him and said, "Some powerful supporter has come to help him. Angada told me that Sugriva had made friendship with Sri Rama. Abandon all enmity with Sugriva. Bring him back and make him the heir-apparent and seek the protection of Rama." But Vali did not pay any attention to the words of his wife."

Vali replied, "O beloved Tara ! How can a brave person like me remain at home when he heard a challenge from his enemy. I shall kill him and come back quickly. Be not afraid."

There was a terrible fight between Vali and Sugriva. Sri Rama took an arrow and put in the bow of Indra. He was hidden by a tree. He discharged the arrow against the chest of Vali. Vali fell down on the ground.

Vali said to Rama, "You hid yourself behind a tree and shot an arrow on my chest. What glory didst thou gain by fighting like a thief ? You have done a highly reproachable act. You are not aware of the duties of a king. Thou shouldst have fought me in an open battle. What has Sugriva done for thee which I did not ? Dost thou, O Rama ! not know my strength which is known throughout the world ? Having bound Ravana together with all his family I could bring him together with Sita and Lanka in half a second. Thou art known in the world as a follower of Dharma. Tell me what Dharma didst thou achieve by killing me like an ordinary hunter. My flesh cannot be eaten. What shall thou do by killing me ?"

Sri Rama replied, "I protect Dharma by killing wicked people. You have forcibly taken your younger brother's wife. A daughter, a sister, and a brother's wife and a daughter-in-law are all equal. One who goes to any one of these deserves death by kings. The eldest brother, the father and the preceptor are to be regarded as parents by one who adheres to the path of Dharma. A younger brother, one's own son and the disciple are to be considered equal to sons."

Then Vali did not find any fault in Sri Rama's action. He replied with folded hands. "What you have said is quite true. Kindly forgive whatever I said from ignorance. A sight of thee is difficult to get even by great Yogis. By reciting whose name at the moment of death one attains to the supreme abode, even he is verily standing before me as I am about to die. Have mercy on young Angada. Let not Sugriva treat my wife and son harshly."

Vali abandoned the body of a monkey and became the king of the Gods that very moment.

Tara wept bitterly on account of the death of her husband. Sri Rama consoled her. Then Sugriva performed the funeral rites of his brother.

Sri Rama said to Sugriva, "Do thou speedily go by my order and instal thyself in the kingship of Kiskindha. I shall not enter a town for fourteen years. My brother Lakshmana shall come to thy town. Do thou instal Angada as heir-apparent. I shall live near the top of the hill with my brother during the rainy season. Make vigorous attempts in the search of Sita."

Sugriva said, "O Lord Rama! I shall do whatever thou hast ordered me." Sugriva went to Kis-

kindha with Lakshmana and carried out the commands of Sri Rama. Then Rama went with Lakshmana to the top of the Pravarsana hill.

III

Search for Sita

Sri Rama said to Lakshmana, "I do not know for certain up to this time if Sita is alive or dead. Sugriva is apparently very ungrateful. He has obtained the kingdom. He has no enemy to attack him. He is surrounded by women and addicted to drink. He has not yet started the search of my beloved. That vile wretch has forgotten me. Go to Kiskindha and frighten Sugriva."

Lakshmana went to the city and said, "O Sugriva ! O vile wretch ! Thou hast forgotten Sri Rama. The arrow that killed the brave Vali is to-day waiting to kill thee."

Sri Hanuman said, "O Lakshmana ! the Lord of the monkeys has not forgotten the work of Sri Rama. Millions of monkeys have come from all directions. They shall go speedily in search of Sita. Sugriva shall do all the work of Rama. He is a great devotee of Rama than thyself."

Thereupon Hanuman, Lakshmana and Sugriva went to Sri Rama in the company of Nila and Angada and the rest.

Sugriva said, "Innumerable monkeys who are capable of assuming various forms, who are all skilled in battle, who are born of the energy of gods, have all assembled at the Kulachal hills. There are some who possess the strength of an elephant, some that of ten elephants, some the strength of myriad

elephants and there are some of immeasurable strength. Some are like black mountains, some are of the colour of gold, some have red faces and others have long hair; some are like pure crystal.

"The chief of the bear, Jambavan of great intelligence, who is my chief minister, is the leader of a million bears. This is Hanuman of great prowess. Here are Nala, Nila, Gavya, Gavaksha, Susena, etc. They are all equal to Indra in strength. Each of them is a leader of a crore of monkeys. They all have given up their lives for thy sake, O Lord Rama. They are fighters with boulders of rocks."

Sri Rama embraced Sugriva and said, "Send them in search of Sita."

Sugriva deputed powerful monkeys in search of Sita in all directions.

He specially deputed to the southern quarters monkeys of great strength. They were Angad, Jambavan, Hanuman, Nala, Susena, Sarabha, Maindava and Dvidida. He said to them. "Do thou carefully search for Sita. Come back within one month. If without seeing Janaki you delay even for a day beyond the month, then O monkeys, you will be killed by me."

Then Sri Rama said to Hanuman, "Take my ring as a token of recognition. It bears my name. Give it to Janaki. In this work I can rely on you. I know all your strength."

Angada and the rest went about here and there in search of Sita. All the monkeys got tired of searching for Sita. Then they all went to the foot of the sacred Mahendra mountain which was on the shore of the southern ocean. Angada said to the monkeys,

"We have not yet found Sita. We have carried out the commands of the king. If we go back to Kishkindha, Sugriva will kill us. Sitting here to die is better than suffering death at the hands of Sugriva. The ocean is uncrossable and unfathomable. What shall we do now." They all sat there and resolved to die.

IV

Monkeys and Sampati on the sea-shore.

A big vulture came out of the cave of the Mahendra hill. The vulture saw those monkeys and said, "I have today got much to eat. I shall eat each one of these gradually day after day." The monkeys heard these words of the vulture and said, "This vulture shall doubtless eat us all. We have not done any portion of Sri Rama's work. We have also not done service to Sugriva nor to ourselves. This vulture will kill us only. We will go to the abode of Yama. Oh! how fortunate was Jatayu, the wise, the follower of Dharma. He attained salvation or the abode of supreme bliss which Yogins cannot attain.

Sampati, the great vulture, heard the speech of the monkeys and said, "Who are you? You are repeating the name of my brother Jatayu which is like nectar into my ears. Be not afraid, O Monkeys! tell me all about Jatayu. I will be immensely delighted."

Angada replied, "Sri Rama, son of Dasaratha, together with Lakshmana and Sita, his wife, was roaming about in the forest. His wife Sita was carried away by the wicked Ravana. As she was crying 'Rama, Rama' the Lord of the birds, Jatayu heard her cries. Jatayu had a formidable fight with

Ravana. He was cremated by Rama. Rama then went to Sugriva and made friendship with him with fire as the witness. Rama killed Vali and installed Sugriva as king of Kiskindha.

"Then Sugriva sent us for the purpose of searching Sita. He told us, 'You should return within a month; otherwise I shall kill you all.' We have been wandering in the forests. Nearly a month has elapsed and we do not yet know the whereabouts of Sita. We are, therefore, sitting here on the sea-shore to die. If thou knowest, O bird, do tell us of the whereabouts of Sita. We will be immensely grateful to you indeed."

Having heard this sweet speech of Angada, Sampati was highly pleased. He said, "O Lord of monkeys; Jatayu was my beloved brother. I have heard news of him after many years. Take me near the water to offer oblations to my brother. After that I shall serve you through speech. I shall tell you the way to accomplish your work."

The monkeys carried the bird to the sea-shore. Sampati took a bath and gave libations of water to brother. He was then brought back to his place.

Sampati said, "There is a town called Lanka on the top of the Trikuta hill. Sita lives there in the Asokavana. She is well protected by Rakshasa women. That Lanka is in the midst of the ocean. It is a hundred Yojana (four hundred Kos) from this place. I do see Lanka as well as Sita. There is no doubt in this. I can see so far as I am a vulture. He who can cross the ocean which extends for a hundred Yojanas shall undoubtedly come back after seeing Sita."

All the monkeys said, "O mighty Sampati; please tell us your history from the very beginning. Then Sampati said: "I and Jatayu were brothers. We were very proud of our strength. In order to test it we flew up from conceit to reach the orb of the sun. We flew for several thousands of Yojanas. Then Jatayu was scorched. I covered him with my wings. My wings were burnt by the rays of the sun. I then fell over the top of the Vindhya mountain. I became unconscious for three days. Then I slowly opened my eyes: I saw a good Asram. Slowly I went near it. Chandrama, the Lord of the Munis said to me, "O Sampati! why have thy wings been burnt down? I told the Muni all that I had done. Then the Muni said, "In the Treta Yuga Narayan will incarnate as the son of Dasaratha. He shall come to the Dandaka forest together with his wife Sita and Lakshmana for the destruction of Ravana. Ravana shall carry away Sita like a thief. Then by the command of Sugriva monkeys shall come in search of her to the sea-shore. Tell them the whereabouts of Sita truly. Then the two new wings shall appear in your body."

Thus did Chandrama, the Lord of the Munis, advise me. See! my wings have sprung forth anew. They are very tender. I am going now. You will surely see Sita. Make efforts for crossing the ocean.

Even a wicked man crosses this unfathomable ocean of this worldly life by the mere remembrance of the name of Lord Rama. Then how shall you, O monkeys, the dear devotees of Rama not be able to cross this small ocean before you? May all good betide you!

V

Hanuman.

All the monkeys consulted amongst themselves as to how they shall cross the ocean. Angada said to them, "Which of you shall cross the ocean and do the work of the king ? Let that brave person get up and come forward at once. He shall be the supporter of Sri Rama, Sugriva and all the monkeys."

On hearing the words of Angada all the leaders sat silent. They looked at each other but said nothing.

Angada then said, "Let each one say about his capacity or ability in doing this work. We shall then know who shall be able to do the task."

Thereupon each of the leaders declared his power of going through the ocean. One leader said, "I can cross over ten Yojanas." Another said, "I can cross over twenty Yojanas." The third leader declared, "I can cross over thirty Yojanas." Then Jambavan said. "I can cross over 90 Yojanas. But now I am not able to cross the ocean on account of old age." Angada declared, "I can go across the ocean. But I do not know if I have strength to cross it back. Jambavan said, "O Angada! thou art our king and guide. I cannot ask you to take up the work although you are capable of doing."

Angada said, "If it is so let us sleep on the bed of grass as before. When none of us can do the work we should prepare ourselves to meet death from the hands of Sugriva.

Then Jambavan said, "I shall point out to you that person by whom our work shall be accomplished quickly."

Jambavan said to Hanuman, "O Hanuman ! why are you sitting silently when we have a great work in hand ? Show your strength today. You are equal to wind in strength. You are created for doing the work of Sri Rama. As soon as you were born you said when you saw the sun rising in the horizon "I shall catch this ripe fruit for my food" and flew in the sky for 500 Yojanas. Therefore, who can describe your strength and greatness. Get up now. Do thou this great work of Sri Rama. Save us. You are a hero of fiery resolve."

On hearing those words of Jambavan, Hanuman was immensely delighted. He made a roar like that of a lion. He became like a mountain. He said. "I shall cross the ocean immediately, reduce Lanka to ashes, kill Ravana with all his family and bring Sita. Or I shall tie Ravana on his neck by a rope with my left hand, uproot Lanka together with its hills and throw it in front of Rama."

Jambavan said, "O Hanuman ! May Lord bless you. Do thou start the work at once."

Hanuman went up the top of the Mahendra mountain with the blessings of Jambavan and assumed a wonderful shape. He meditated upon Rama, recited His name and started his aerial journey.

5. SUNDARA KANDAM

I

Hanuman Crosses the Ocean

Sri Hanuman said, "Meditating on Sri Rama in my heart I shall cross this ocean which extends over a hundred Yojanas." So saying Hanuman leaped over the ocean with the speed of the wind.

The gods wanted to test whether Hanuman had the strength to enter Lanka. They sent the mother of the serpents called Sursa to put obstacles in his way. She stood in front of Hanuman and said, "Thou hast been ordained as my food. I am hungry. Come and enter my mouth quickly."

Hanuman replied. "O Mother ! I am going now to see Sita by the command of Sri Rama. I shall see Sita and inform Sri Rama of her welfare. Then I shall enter your mouth. Give me way now."

Sursa said, "I am very hungry now. Do thou go after entering my mouth. Otherwise I shall eat thee." Hanuman said, "Open your mouth quickly, I shall enter your mouth and then go. I am in a great hurry."

Hanuman extended his body to a Yojana and stood before her. Sursa made her mouth five Yojanas. Then Hanuman extended his body to ten Yojanas. Then Sursa made her mouth twenty Yojanas wide. Hanuman extended his body to thirty Yojanas. Then Sursa made her body fifty Yojanas

wide. Hanuman became of the size of a thumb, entered her mouth and came out through the ear. Sursa said, "Go and do the work of Sri Rama."

The mountain Mainaka came out of the waters at the command of the ocean and said to Hanuman, "I am, O great monkey! the mountain Mainaka. I am directed by the ocean to give thee rest. Come out and sit on me and enjoy the delicious fruits."

Hanuman said, "I cannot eat anything and take rest now. I am going for the work of Sri Rama. I must go forth quickly". He touched the top of the hill with his hand and marched onwards speedily.

He proceeded a short distance. Then a Rakshasi named Singhika who used to catch shadows, caught the shadow of Hanuman. Hanuman looked downwards. He fell into the waters and killed her with his feet.

After crossing the ocean Hanuman saw Lanka situated on the peak of the Trikuta mountain which was full of fruit trees of various kinds. The town was surrounded by ramparts and ditches on all sides.

II

Hanuman in Lanka

He assumed a small shape and entered the gate of Lanka at night. A Rakshasa woman stopped him and said, "I am the guardian of Lanka. Who art thou that enterest the town in the form of a monkey like a thief. What dost thou wish to do?" So saying she struck him with her foot. Hanuman forcibly struck her with his fist. She fell down immediately vomiting blood. She got up and said to Hanuman. "Enter. Thou hast conquered Lanka. Formerly Brahma has told me that Narayana will

incarnate as Rama in the twenty-eighth Treta Yuga. Rama will go to the forest with his wife Sita. Then Ravana will carry Sita. After that Rama will have Sugriva for his friend and Sugriva will send monkeys to find out Sita. Then one of the monkeys will come to thee at night. You will attack him and he will strike you with his fist. Then will come the end of Ravana."

"There is a beautiful pleasure garden inside the the palace of Ravana. There is a Shinshipa tree in its middle. There sits Sita. She is guarded by terrible Rakshasa women. Meet her. Have a talk to her and then inform Sri Rama of the glad news of meeting Sita. I have remembrance of Sri Rama today. Blessed I am. That remembrance destroys the round of births and deaths. It is very difficult to get the company of devotees. Let Sri Rama be gracious unto me. Let Him enthrone himself in my heart."

Hanuman assumed a small body and wandered here and there. He entered the palace of Ravana and searched in all places. He did not see Sita. He spoke these words, "Sampati told me that Sita was in Ravana's palace but I do not see her." Then he recollected what Lankini, the guardian of Lanka told him. He quickly went to the beautiful Asokavan. It had tanks with steps made of gems. It was surrounded by palaces of gold. He saw a Shinshipa tree. At its foot Hanuman saw Sita. She was surrounded by Rakshasa women. She was emaciated and wore dirty clothes. She slept on the earth. She was uttering Rama, Rama.

Hanuman reflected within himself, "I have achieved my object. I have seen Sita. I have done

the work of Sri Rama." Hanuman was hiding himself amongst the branches of the tree.

Ravana entered the garden and said to Sita, "O fair lady! I love you. Become my queen. Leave this folly. Look at my prosperity, fortune and fame. What will you do with Rama, clad in bark? I sent many people to search for him. They could not see him. What shalt thou do with Rama who has no desire for thee even though thou always cherishest him? Though thou givest him all the pleasures of the senses and though thou doest all actions for him and though he enjoys them, Rama does not know that he is the enjoyer. He is therefore an ungrateful wretch destitute of all qualities. He has no love for thee. You are sunk in distress. Even now he has not come. Without the sense of mineness, he is a fool. He thinks himself to be a wise man. I am very much attached to you. Become my wife. Rama is a wanderer in the forest. I doubt whether he lives or not. If thou acceptest me, thou shalt become the ruler of the women of the gods, the Gandharvas, Yakshas, Kinnaras etc."

Hearing these indecent words of Ravana Sita placed a piece of straw between herself and Ravana and said to him. "Afraid of Raghava you took the disguise of a mendicant during the absence of Rama and Lakshmana and carried me stealthily. You will reap the fruit of it quickly. Sri Rama will soon dry up the ocean by his arrows or bridge it and will come to kill thee in battle. Having killed thee together with thy sons and army he shall take me back to Ayodhya. I am devoted to my husband. He is my eternal Lord. Look to Dharma. Follow the rules of Dharma.

Lead a righteous life. The wives of others must be protected like your own: You have a perverted mind. You are unrighteous. Restrain yourself and take me back to Sri Rama. Then alone good will attend you and you will be saved. Otherwise you will surely meet your death."

Hearing this harsh speech of Sita Ravana became angry. He lifted up his sword and rushed to kill Sita. Then Mandodari interrupted and prevented him from doing a dastardly act.

Ravana said to Sita, "If within two months you submit yourself to me, you will enjoy all kingly pleasures with me. If you do not agree to share my bed within two months, you will be made as one of the dishes for my morning meal." Having said so, Ravana returned to his palace.

The Rakshasa women then came to Sita and terrified her with threats. One woman said, "I shall cut to pieces the body of Sita." Another opened wide her terrible mouth and threatened Sita. One of them said, "Thy youth has been wasted. Become the wife of Ravana. It shall become fruitful."

Another Rakshasi woman Trijata, the daughter of Vibhishana said, "O vile Rakshasa women. Do not frighten Sita who is weeping. Bow to her. I had a dream. I saw Rama together with Lakshmana. Having burnt the whole of the town of Lanka and killed Ravana in battle Rama took Sita with him. I saw Ravana wearing a necklace of the skulls of his own sons and grandsons. Vibhishana goes to Rama and serves his feet with reverence."

"Rama will kill Ravana and his family and give the kingdom to Vibhishana. He will take Sita in

his arms and go to his own city. There is no doubt in this." Hearing these words of Trijata the Rakshasa women were frightened. They went to sleep.

Sita wept loudly for a long time. She caught hold of the branch of a tree and determined to die. She thought within herself, "The Rakshasa women will eat me up. I shall leave this body by hanging myself. What is the use of my living here in the midst of these Rakshasas? My hair is long enough to serve as a hanging rope."

III

Hanuman's Visit to Sita

Hanuman heard the conversation that went on between Ravana and Sita. He wanted to console Sita who made a resolution to hang herself. He slowly said as follows in order to make her hear of it. "There was the great king Dasaratha, the Lord of Ayodhya. He had four sons. They were Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata and Satrughna. Sri Rama went to the Dandaka forest with his brother Lakshmana and wife Sita by the command of his father. He lived on the banks of the Gautami in Panchavati. There Sita was carried by Ravana during the absence of Rama. Then Rama went about searching for Sita. On the way he met Jatayu the king of the birds lying on the ground. He despatched him to heaven and came to Rishyamuka hill.

"Rama made friendship with Sugriva. He killed Vali, brother of Sugriva, and installed Sugriva in the kingdom. Then Sugriva collected all monkeys and sent them in all directions to search Sita. I am one of those monkeys and a minister of Sugriva. At the instructions of Sampati I speedily crossed the

ocean which extends to a hundred Yojanas. I came to the city of Lanka in search of Sita. I reached the Asokavan while searching for her. I have now found her under the Shinshipa tree sunk in grief and sorrow. I have achieved my object."

Sita heard all this in due order. She was struck with great astonishment. She reflected within herself, "Have I heard this in the heavens uttered by the wind? Is this a dream or an illusion of my own mind, or is it true? I have no sleep on account of grief, how can it be an illusion?"

She said, "Whoever has said this, which is like nectar unto my ears, let that great soul and the speaker of such dear words show himself to me."

Hanuman heard these words of Sita. He slowly descended from the tree and stood before her. He prostrated himself before Sita and stood before her with folded hands.

Sita got frightened and thought Ravana had come to allure her by illusion under the disguise of a monkey. Then Hanuman said to Sita, "O venerable Mother! I am not what thou suspects me to be. Leave off thy suspicion. I am the slave of Rama, the supreme Lord. I am the minister of Sugriva, the Lord of the monkeys. I am the son of Vayu, the wind God."

Sita said, "How can there be companionship between monkeys and men, when thou sayest that thou art the slave of Sri Rama."

Hanuman replied, "Sri Rama came to the Rishyamuka hill at the suggestion of Sabari. Sugriva saw Rama and Lakshmana when he was sitting on the Rishyamuka hill. Sugriva sent me to Rama to

know his mind. I went to Rama, I came to know of the purity of the intention of Sri Rama. I placed both of them on my shoulders, took them to Sugriva and made them friends.

"Sugriva's wife had been kept by Vali, his elder brother. Sri Rama killed Vali and installed Sugriva in the kingdom. Sugriva sent powerful monkeys to all the quarters of the earth to search for you. Sri Rama told me, 'This work of mine wholly depends upon thee. Do thou inform Sita of mine and Lakshmana's welfare. Do thou give to Sita this beautiful ring of mine which bears the letters of my name for the purpose of recognition.'

"So saying he gave me this ring from his finger. I have brought it carefully. Do thou see this ring, my venerable Mother." Hanuman gave the ring to Sita and bowed unto her and stood at a distance with folded hands.

Sita became overjoyed when she saw the ring bearing the name of Rama. She placed it on her head and shed tears of joy.

Sita said, "Do thou tell Rama of my condition. Let him have pity for me. My life is only of two months' duration. If Rama does not come, Ravana will eat me up."

Hanuman said, "Rama together with Lakshmana as well as Sugriva and his army will soon come. He will kill Ravana and will take thee to Ayodhya. There is no doubt in this. O venerable Mother! Give me some token by which Sri Rama may have faith in me."

Sita said, "Do thou tell Sri Rama and Lakshmana that I am extremely anxious to know of their wel-

fare." She then took off her head the ornament, the effulgent Chudamini and gave it to Hanuman saying, "with this Rama shall have faith in thee."

Sita said, "O Hanuman ! something more for the purpose of recognition. In Chitrakuta Sri Rama placed his head in my lap and slept. The son of Indra assumed the form of a crow, came there and pricked my toe with his beak and made it bleed for the purpose of eating the flesh. Then Rama woke up and saw the wound in my foot. He saw a crow in front of me with his mouth full of blood. He took a piece of straw and applied to it the Brahmastra and threw it on the crow. The crow ran about all the worlds. Even Indra and Brahma could not protect it. Then he fell at the feet of Rama. Sri Rama said, 'This weapon is unfailing. Give up one of your eyes and go away from here.' The crow gave his left eye and went away. O Hanuman remind Sri Rama of this event for the purpose of recognition."

Sri Hanuman took the jewel with great joy and made prostrations to Sita. Sita then said to Hanuman, "How will you fight with the Rakshasas. All the monkeys are of small bodies like yourself." Thereupon Hanuman showed her his former shape like the Meru and the Mandara mountains. Sita was struck with wonder and said, "Thou art capable of attaining success."

Sri Hanuman thought within himself, "I came here to do the work of my Lord. I shall do something more. I should see Ravana and talk to him." He then uprooted the trees of the Asokavan and destroyed it. He killed many Rakshasa women also. They informed Ravana of all that Hanuman had done. Ravana sent an army of Rakshasas to attack

Hanuman. Hanuman took up a club and pounded the Rakshasas in the twinkling of an eye. Ravana became very furious. He sent five of his generals and seven sons of his ministers. Hanuman killed all of them. Then Ravana sent his son Akshaya Kumar. Hanuman struck his head with his club.

Then Indrajit himself went to attack Hanuman. He pierced Hanuman with his arrows. Hanuman broke them down and made a roar like a lion. Hanuman took a pillar and killed the charioteer and horses and broke his car to pieces. Then Indrajit bound Hanuman with his Brahmastra and brought him in the presence of Ravana. Hanuman allowed himself to be bound because he wanted to give respect for the Brahmastra.

The Brahmastra soon disappeared on account of the boon given to Hanuman by Brahma. Ravana said, "Do thou, O Prahasta, ask this monkey as to why he has come here, what is his mission, and whence has he come. Why did he destroy Asokavan and why did he kill my Rakshasas?"

Prahasta said to Hanuman, "O monkey? by whom hast thou been sent? Do not have any fear. I shall have thee released. Do thou speak the whole truth in the presence of the king."

Then Hanuman spoke, "O Ravana! hear well from me. I am the messenger of Sri Rama who abides in all hearts, who is the Lord of all, whose wife thou hast abducted for thy own destruction like a bitch carrying off sacrificial oblation. Sri Rama came to the Matanga hill and made friendship with Sugriva in the presence of fire. He killed Vali with one arrow and installed Sugriva as king.

"That Lord of the monkeys who is endowed with great strength and prowess is greatly enraged at thee. He is now at the Varsha hill with a crore of powerful monkeys. He has Rama and Lakshmana for his companions. Sugriva went about in search of Sita in all the four directions under the command of Sri Rama. I am the son of wind-god. I have also come in search of Sita. I have seen her here. I have destroyed the forest as I am a monkey. I killed the Rakshasas to save my body. Meghanada bound me with the Brahmastra and has brought me here.

"The Brahma weapon touched me only. It has disappeared on account of the boon given to me by Brahma. I have come here with a heart full of mercy for thee for telling thee what is for thy good.

"Lead a virtuous divine life that leads to the final emancipation. Thou art a Brahmin born in a noble family. Thou art the grandson of Pulastya and brother of Kubera. Thou art not a Rakshasa. Thou art not this physical body. Thou art above all modifications. Misery arises out of the gross body. Misery springs from ignorance and is false like objects seen in a dream. Thou art in essence Atma that is changeless. Just as the Akasa which pervades all is not tainted by what is brought into contact, so also the Atman though it abides in your body is not affected by anything. The idea that the body is the Atma is the root for all bondage.

"The body is not the Self. It is a modification of earth. The life-breath is a modification of the wind. The mind is not the Self. It is a modification of the Prakriti—or primordial matter.

“The Atma is an embodiment of bliss and knowledge. It is beyond all modifications. It is distinct from the conglomeration of the body and the rest. It is the Lord of all. ‘I am intelligence itself. I am bliss itself. I am birthless and decayless.’ Realising this one attains the final emancipation. This Atma is free from taints and faults. It is above all adjuncts. Knowing the self to be such one is liberated from birth and death.

“I shall tell thee the means of attaining the final release from the round of birth and death. Devotion to Vishnu is a great purifier of the heart. From devotion arises knowledge. From knowledge comes realisation of the purest Self. Knowing this well one goes to the supreme abode, and is merged in the supreme Self.

“Do thou, therefore, today worship Vishnu who is the Lord Rama, the consort of Sita, who is Laksmi. Abandon all foolishness and enmity. Do thou serve Rama. Take Sita with thee, do thou go with thy family and sons and bow unto Rama. Thereby thou shalt be freed from all fears.

“Without developing devotion to Rama, who is the supreme Self, who lives in the heart, who is all bliss, who is secondless, how can man cross the ocean of worldly life which has sorrow, pain and misery for its waves.

“If you do not listen to me, then you will be burnt in the fire of ignorance. You will fall in the pit of ignorance by your own evil actions. You will not have even the shadow of emancipation. You will not be able to protect yourself on account of enmity towards Sri Rama”

Ravana heard the speech of Hanuman and was very much enraged at him. He said, "Why art thou talking such nonsense in my presence as if thou hadst no fear. Thou art the vilest of monkeys. I shall kill Rama who is the vilest amongst men together with Sugriva. I shall kill thee today and kill Sita also."

Hanuman replied, "O wicked Ravana! even a crore of beings like thee are not equal to me." Ravana became very angry. He said to the Rakshasas "Cut this monkey to pieces." Then Vibhishana interrupted and said, "O king! a messenger sent by another king should not be killed by thee. If the monkey is killed, who shall convey the message to Rama for whom thou art waiting to come for being killed. Do thou therefore think of something equal to killing him. Let the monkey go with that mark by seeing which Rama may come to thee soon together with Sugriva."

IV

Hanuman Burns Lanka

Ravana said, "The tail of monkeys is very dear to them. Let his tail be covered with clothes and fire be applied to it. Let him be taken round the town and then be sent away. Let all the leaders of the monkeys witness this."

The Rakshasas tied to the tail of Hanuman clothes soaked in oil and set fire to the clothes. They bound him tight with cords and dragged him round the town, saying, "This monkey is a thief" by blast of trumpets.

Hanuman became of small size and released himself from his bonds. He then assumed the size of a

mountain, took up a pillar and killed the Rakshasas. He jumped from house to house and burnt the whole of Lanka. The whole town was reduced to ashes with the exception of the house of Vibhishana.

Then Hanuman jumped into the sea and cooled himself. The fire did not burn the tail of Hanuman. By the remembrance of Rama's name even the three kinds of fire of Samsara viz., Adhyatma, Adhibahutic, Adhidaivic are extinguished. How can then the special messenger of Sri Ram be burnt by ordinary fire ?

Thereupon Hanuman went to see Sita. He informed her of everything and made prostrations to her and said, "I shall go to Rama. He will come soon with his brother to see thee."

Sita said, "I have forgotten all about my grief on seeing thee. Now thou art going. How shall I live without knowing the welfare of Rama ?"

Hanuman said, "Do thou mount on my shoulders. I shall in a moment take thee to Rama."

Sita said, "Sri Rama should come here, kill Ravana in battle and then take me away. Then it will speak of his eternal glory."

Thereupon Hanuman went to the foot of the hill in order to cross the ocean. He made a leap over the ocean and made a roar when he was nearing his destination. The other monkeys became greatly delighted. They also roared loudly. They all said, "Hanuman has come after accomplishing his task." Hanuman descended on the top of the hill and said, "I have seen Sita and destroyed Lanka and the groves also. I spoke to Ravana also." All the monkeys embraced Hanuman in joy and said, "We shall go to

Rama and Sugriva this moment." They all marched speedily to see Sri Rama and Sugriva. On the way they entered the Madhuvan of Sugriva, beat the guards, ate the fruits and drank the honey.

V

Hanuman's Visit to Rama.

Then Hanuman, Angad and others appeared in the presence of Rama and Sugriva. Hanuman prostrated before Rama and said, "Sita has been seen. She is well. She has enquired of Thy welfare and that of Lakshmana. She is living in the Asokavana under a Shinshipa tree. She has become emaciated. She is surrounded by Rakshasa women. She is wearing dirty clothes. She is not taking any food. She is always uttering 'O Rama, O Rama.' I hid myself under the branches of a tree and related thy story, thy birth, thy going to the Dandaka forest, and the abduction of Sita by Ravana in Thy absence, the way in which Thy friendship with Sugriva took place and Vali was killed and the despatch of monkeys by Sugriva in order to search Janaki. I said, 'Powerful monkeys have gone in all directions. Of these I am one of them and have come here.' She became highly delighted. She said, 'Who has made me hear such sweet words which are like nectar to my ears, let him come forward and stand in front of me.' Then I appeared in front of her and made my prostrations.

"She asked me who I was. I then told her everything in detail. Then I gave her the ring which you had given me. Thereupon she placed full confidence in me and said, 'O Hanuman ! do thou tell Sri Rama how the Rakshasa women treat me.' I told her,

‘O venerable Mother ! Sri Rama is ever thinking of thee. He is grieving for thee day and night. As soon as he hears that you are in Asokavana he will at once come to Lanka with Sugriva, Lakshmana and the army of monkeys. He will kill Ravana and will take thee to Ayodhya. Do give me some token whereby the Lord may believe me.’

“She gave me her head ornament, Chudamani which she tied to her hair and told me the crow incident at the Chitrakuta hill. She also told me that she would not live beyond two months and Ravana would eat her up if Sri Rama would not come to rescue her within that period. Hanuman handed over the Chudamani to Sri Rama.”

Sri Rama said, “This jewel does verily shine on the head of my beloved. When I look at it I think Sita herself has returned.”

Hanuman continued, “O Lord ! with her eyes full of tears she said, ‘Do thou tell Sri Rama of my welfare. Do thou also tell Lakshmana to forgive whatever harsh words I had said to him through ignorance. Do thou do that by which Rama may relieve me of my distress.’ She wept bitterly in great distress. I comforted her and said, ‘I shall tell Sri Rama everything. O venerable Mother ! Sri Rama and Lakshmana will come to your presence quickly. They will destroy Ravana, his sons and the whole army of Rakshasas. You will soon see Sri Rama installed in Ayodhya along with you.’

I then destroyed the Asokavana and killed many Rakshasas and Akshaya Kumar, the son of Ravana. I burnt the whole of Lanka.”

Sri Rama was immensely pleased when he heard the speech of Hanuman. He said, "O mighty hero : thou hast done what even gods could not do. I see nothing to give you as a reward for the service thou hast done me."

I now give thee, O Hanuman ! all that I have. Sri Rama embraced him and shed tears of love. Sri Rama said, "Thou art my devotee. Thou art very dear to me. Embrace by me is difficult of attainment in this world."

People attain the supreme abode of Hari by worshipping His lotus feet with Tulsi leaves etc. Then what to speak of Hanuman who was embraced by Sri Rama on account of his accumulation of virtuous deeds in the past ?

6. YUDDHA KANDA.

Sri Rama said to Sugriva, "This is the most auspicious hour. Make arrangements for the march of our army." Sugriva, the commander-in-chief of the army, directed the monkeys. The whole army was stationed on the banks of the ocean.

When Ravana came to know of the achievement of Hanuman in Lanka which even gods could not accomplish, he was overcome by shame. He called his ministers and said to them, "Rama is coming towards the city of Lanka. He will surely cross the ocean easily. A single monkey has done great mischief. He has burnt the whole city. Sita has also been discovered by him. I wish to consult with you all."

The powerful Rakshasas said, "We will kill Rama, Lakshmana and Sugriva and Hanuman this very day." Vibhishana interrupted and said, "Beloved brother :

Neither Kumbhakarna, nor Indrajit can withstand Rama in battle. Rama has not done any wrong to you. You have carried away his wife stealthily. Sri Rama always treads the path of righteousness. It is a heinous sin to think of another man's wife. This will spoil your good name. It will destroy your life also. Please restore back Sita to Sri Rama at once. Rama is very powerful. You cannot escape even if you are protected by all the gods or Lord Shiva Himself."

The wicked Ravana did not accept the wise and beneficial counsel of Vibhishana. He said, "I am not afraid of Rama. I am not going to return Sita. Even if he appears in battle with gods on his side, he will not be able to fight with me. You are an enemy in the guise of a friend. I am your benefactor. You are not doing what is good for me. Your company is not congenial for me. You are a vile and ungrateful person. One's own relations always wish for one's destruction. One may live with a poisonous cobra but one should never live with one who talks like a friend but behaves like an enemy at the time of danger. If any other Rakshasa had uttered even one word like this, I would have killed him this very moment. Fie on thee, O thou lowest of the family of the Rakshasas. You can join Rama and serve him."

Vibhishana immediately went out of the assembly and said to Ravana, "I spoke words that are beneficial to you. You have insulted me. Yet you are my elder brother and a father unto me. But you do not tread the path of righteousness. Do not rush to your own destruction. Rama shall kill you and your sons. I am going to Sri Rama."

Vibhishana's Surrender

Vibhishana renounced his family and all connections and went to Sri Rama with a desire to serve him with intense devotion.

Vibhishana said to Rama, "O Raghava! I am Vibhishana, the younger brother of Ravana. I have been abandoned by my brother. Therefore I have sought thy shelter. I told him again and again to send Sita to Thee. But he does not listen to me, as he is impelled by destiny."

Sugriva said to Rama, "This vile, deceitful Rakshasa should not be trusted by Thee. He is the powerful brother of Ravana. He will kill us on finding our weak points. Do thou command me. I shall have him killed by the monkeys."

Hanuman said, "Vibhishana has heard of your prowess and found wickedness in Ravana. He has come here with the intention of obtaining the kingdom. Sri Rama said, "I will never forsake one who has come to me as a friend even if he has an evil intention. He has sought my shelter. Even if Ravana were to come and take shelter under me I shall give him protection. Even if an enemy seeks refuge of another he should be protected by one who wants to do his duty even at the risk of his life. Whoever once takes my shelter saying 'I am thine', unto him I shall give protection from all creatures. This is my vow."

Rama embraced Vibhishana. He said to Lakshmana. "Bring water from the ocean. I shall instal him as king of Lanka." Sri Rama installed Vibhishana as the king of Lanka with the water brought by Lakshmana. Sri Rama said, "Till the

sun and the moon continue to shine, till the earth retains her place, till my story is current in the world, let him rule Lanka."

The ocean-god did not show himself to Rama. Rama wanted to dry up the ocean. He took his bow and arrow. The sea became agitated and receded a Yojana from its shore. The ocean-god came up and said, "Let Nala build a bridge over my waters." Then Nala built a bridge which was a hundred Yojanas in extent with the aid of the monkeys. The monkeys quickly crossed the ocean by that bridge.

Sri Rama said to Angada, the son of Vali, "Go to Ravana and tell him as from me, 'O mean Rakshasa! I am now waiting at the door of Lanka. I am your chastiser. Show me your strength by which you carried away Sita stealthily. I will destroy the Rakshasas to the very root by my arrows if you do not seek my shelter after restoring Sita. Vibhishana who is virtuous will become the king of Lanka. If you once come within my sight you can never return alive.' "

Angada repeated to Ravana the message of Sri Rama. Ravana became very angry and ordered his Rakshasas to prepare for battle.

The monkey leaders Hanuman, Angada, Kumuda, Nil, Nala, Sarabha, Mainda, Dwivida, Jambavan, Dahivakra, Kesari and Tara with their millions of troops besieged the town on all sides. Rama took up his bow and sent an arrow of the shape of a half-moon which cut off Ravana's thousands of umbrellas, as well as the crown in a moment.

Atikaya, Prahasta, Mahanada, Mahodara, Devasatrut, Nikumbha, son of Kumbhakarana,

Devatanka and Narautaka fought bravely against the monkey leaders and attacked them with javelins, daggers, spears, arrows, battle axes and diverse other weapons.

Some Rakshasas were killed by Rama. Others by Sugriva, others by Hanuman, Angad and Lakshmana. Although Rama was the Lord of all yet He took up a human form for mocking the world and did the sport of battle and other actions.

Ravana asked Vidyujjibha a sorcerer to create by magic the head and bow of Rama. Thereupon Vidyujjibha at once produced a magic head and bow. Ravana was highly pleased at that sight. Ravana then proceeded to Asokavan with the head to meet Sita.

Ravana said, "O silly girl ! what will you gain by thinking of Rama. He is dead. Abandon your attachment for him. Be thou mistress of my palace."

Ravana then said, "Vidyujjibha ! place Rama's head before Sita. Let her behold with her own eyes the miserable condition of her husband." Ravana said to Sita, "This is Rama's head. Heroic Prahastha has slain Rama and has brought his bow and quiver. Be my wife, O Sita."

Sita saw with her own eyes Rama's head and his bow. She was overwhelmed with sorrow. She said to Ravana. "Take me immediately to my dead husband and kill me over his corpse." Ravana left the Asoka forest and proceeded to the Assembly Hall as he had to consult with his ministers on some urgent work. As soon as Ravana left the place, that magic head and the bow disappeared in a moment.

Death of Kumbhakarna

Then Ravana ordered the Rakshasas to wake up Kumbhakarna from his sleep. They carried out the instructions of Ravana. Kumbhakarna approached Ravana and said, "O beloved brother ! what should I do now ?"

Ravana said, "As you were in sound sleep you are not aware of the terror that has been caused by Rama. Rama and his party have crossed the ocean. They are now in Lanka. They are causing heavy destruction of our Rakshasas. Many have already been killed in battle by the monkeys. Save this city of Lanka. Destroy these monkeys and the two brothers."

Kumbhakarna said, " O king ! at the time of consultation what I formerly said has now come to pass, as the fruit of your evil action. Follow the advice given by Vibhishana. That course is highly beneficial to us. You can do what you like."

Ravana became very angry when he heard the speech of Kumbhakarna. He said to Kumbhakarna, "Thou were not brought here to impart wisdom, O sage! You instruct me like a venerable Guru who teaches duty. If it pleases do thou do my bidding and fight. If not, do thou go to sleep soundly."

Kumbhakarna said, " Rejoice, O king ! I shall bring the head of Rama from the field of battle in a moment."

Kumbhakarna made a roar and caused great havoc amongst the monkeys. He wielded his Gada and threw down the enemies on all sides.

Sri Rama cut off the right hand of Kumbhakarna with the Vayuastra and the left hand with the

Indrastra. He sent again Indrastra which cut off his head. The Rakshasas informed Ravana of the death of his brother.

On hearing the death of his brave brother Kumbhakarna by Rama, Ravana became overwhelmed with sorrow. He reflected within himself, "The brave Kumbhakarna has been killed. How can I conquer Rama. I did not hear the beneficial counsel of my younger brother Vibhishana. I did not act in accordance with his wise instructions. Hence I suffer now. This is all due to my ignorance. I drove out the righteous Vibhishana. Therefore I am in a miserable plight. Rama is verily strong. His weapons are also very powerful. My Rakshasas have been slain by his powerful weapons."

Death of Meghanada

Ravana ordered his son Meghanada to wage war with Sri Rama and Lakshmana. Meghanad performed seven sacrifices named Agnistoma, Aswamedha, Rajasuya, Gomedha, Vaishnava etc. He performed the difficult sacrifice of Lord Siva and obtained boons from Him. He could go wherever he willed. He could live in the sky and had obtained Tamasi Maya. By this Maya darkness is produced. No one could know anything. He got an invincible bow, an inexhaustible quiver and terrible weapons for the annihilation of the enemy. He performed the sacrifice in Nikumbhila. He was called Indrajit because he obtained victory over Indra.

Indrajit said to his father, "Venerable father! leave all sorrow. I shall kill thy enemies. I shall go to Nikumbhila, propitiate the fire and obtain cars and weapons. Then no one can conquer me. I will

become invincible and unassailable by the enemy." So saying he speedily went to the place for the performance of the Homa. He wore red clothes, a red garland, besmeared himself with red unguents and began to perform the Homa in the Nikumbhila altar in silence.

Vibhishana informed Rama of Indrajit's performing the Homa and said, "O Lord! If this Homa is completed, then Indrajit will become unconquerable by gods and men. Therefore I shall immediately have Indrajit killed by Lakshmana. Indrajit cannot be killed by any one except one who has for twelve years lived without food and sleep. This has been ordained so by Brahma. Lakshmana has not eaten and slept ever since he came out of Ayodhya in order to serve Thee. Do thou orderst Lakshmana to go with me. He shall certainly kill Indrajit."

Thereupon Sri Rama ordered Lakshmana to accompany Vibhishana and kill Indrajit. Vibhishana and Lakshmana then proceeded to Nikumbhila. Vibhishana, said to Lakshmana, "Behold these Rakshasas. That which appears to you like a dark cloud is the Rakshasas army. Be ready to break through this mighty army with great effort. Then you will be able to see Indrajit. Attack him before the sacrifice is completed."

Lakshmana rained down arrows upon the Rakshas who guarded the Homa and Indrajit. Indrajit abandoned the Homa and came out speedily. He mounted on the car with bow in hand and challenged Lakshmana to fight. Then ensued a fierce battle between them. Lakshmana fixed Indrastra to his bow, drew his bow and said, "If Rama, the son of Dasaratha is devoted to Dharma and established in

truth and unequalled in valour in the three worlds, then let this arrow kill the son of Ravana." So saying and drawing up the bow, which was infallible, up to the ear, Lakshmana let it go towards Indrajit. That arrow severed the head of Indrajit from his body and threw it on the ground.

Then Lakshmana and Vibhishana went to see Sri Rama and informed him about the death of Indrajit. Sri Rama said "Well done Lakshmana, I am immensely pleased. Thou hast done a deed which was hard to accomplish. All has been won by the death of Meghanada."

When Ravana heard the death of Indrajit, he became unconscious and fell on the ground. He regained his consciousness and grieved very much over the loss of his son.

Ravana's Homa

Ravana went to Sukracharya, the preceptor of the Asuras and said, "O venerable Guru ! All the Rakshasas have been slain. I am in great distress. How shall I gain victory in the battle ?"

Sri Sukracharya replied, "Give carefully oblations to the fire. If there be no impediment in the Homa, there will arise from the fire for thee a great car, horses, quiver, bows and arrows, armed with which you will become unconquerable. Take the Mantras from me and do the Homa quickly."

Ravana silently began to perform the sacrifice. Vibhishana showed to Rama the smoke of the Homa and said, "O Lord, Ravana has started doing the Homa. If this Homa is completed he will become unconquerable. Do thou send the leaders of the monkeys to throw obstacles in the performance of

Homa." Rama sent Sugriva, Angad, Hanuman and other powerful warriors. Sarsa, the wife of Vibhishana, showed by a sign of the hand the place of the sacrifice.

The monkeys entered the cave, beat the sacrificial priests. Hanuman snatched the sacrificial ladle from the hand of Ravana and struck him. Angad entered the palace of Ravana, bound Mandodari and brought her dragging by the hair. The monkeys broke the sacrifice and went to the forest.

Ravana consoled his wife and said, "My dear! all this is due to fate. I shall just now go and kill Rama and Lakshmana. Otherwise Rama will kill me with his arrows and I shall go to the supreme abode. Thou shouldst perform my funeral and having killed Sita do thou enter the fire with me."

Mandodari said, "My Lord! Sri Rama cannot be conquered by thee or anyone else in battle. He is the supreme Lord Himself. He has taken a human form for thy sake. Why didst thou forcibly carry from the forest his wife Sita. For thy own destruction and for the purpose of having my son Indrajit killed thou didst so. Do thou give back Sita to Rama and instal Vibhishana in the kingdom. Let us go to the forest."

Ravana replied, "How shall I live in the forest? I have lost my sons, brothers and all the hosts of Rakshasas. I shall fight against Rama. I shall go to the supreme abode of Vishnu pierced by his arrows. I am quite aware that Rama is Vishnu Himself and Sita is Lakshmi. Having known this I brought Sita away from the forest by force. I shall go to the supreme abode of Vishnu, killed by Rama in battle. Having crossed this ocean of the world with its five

waves of Kleshas, with the four Yugas as its eddies, with wives, sons, relations, wealth and friends as its crocodiles, wrath for its fire, affection for its net, I shall attain the feet of Hari.

Death of Ravana

Ravana sent his Shakti weapon towards Lakshmana. It pierced the heart of Lakshmana. He fell down on the ground. Sri Rama was very much afflicted at his heart. He said, "If my brother is slain, life is of no use to me, nor is Sita. Of what use is victory to me when Lakshmana is dead? One can get wives and relations also in country after country. But I do not know of that place where a real brother like Lakshmana could be got."

Thereupon Sushena the physician of the army consoled Sri Rama.

"This Lakshmana is not dead. He is alive." Sushena asked Hanuman to bring the Sanjeevini plant from the Oshadhi Parvata.

Sri Hanuman brought it within a short time. Then Sushena squeezed the herb and gave it to Lakshmana to smell through the nose. Lakshmana regained his consciousness and stood up on the ground and said, "O Lord! kill Ravana today according to your promise."

Thereupon Sri Rama shot terrific arrows on Ravana. Ravana also struck Rama with powerful arrows. The fight was a sight for gods to see. The battle was fierce and unparalleled. No other battle could be compared to it. Just as the sky and the sea have nothing to be compared with, this divine fight between Sri Rama and Ravana stands

unparalleled in the history of the world. The gods were witnessing the fight from above.

Rama was standing on the ground. Ravana was riding on a chariot. Therefore Indra sent his car with his charioteer Matali. Then Rama ascended the chariot.

Ravana discharged at Rama a dire Rakshasa weapon. The arrows turned into serpents full of poison and droffed on all sides of Rama. The serpents vomited fire. Sri Rama sent the Garuda astra. The arrows became Garudas and cut off those serpent arrows.

Sri Rama discharged the Indrastra on Ravana. It cut off the head of Ravana. Many heads of Ravana fell on the ground and again joined themselves to his body. Neither day nor night, neither the twilights nor the quarters were visible, nor was the shape of Ravana seen in that battle.

Then Rama was quite astonished. One hundred and one heads of Ravana were cut off. But Ravana did not die.

Vibhishana said to Sri Rama, "O my Lord! This Ravana has got a boon from Brahma. Even though his arms and heads are cut off, they shall soon reappear. There is the water of life in the form of a circle in his navel. Do Thou dry it up by the fire weapon; then only he will die."

Sri Rama took up the Agniastra and pierced the navel of Ravana with it. It dried up the water of life and cut off his heads.

Ravana then appeared with only one chief head and two arms. He rained showers of arrows and weapons on Rama. Rama repulsed the Gandharva

Astra of Ravana with another Gandharvastra and the Daivastra with another Daivastra.

At this moment Agastya Rishi came near and said, "O valiant Rama! Recite the Aditya Hridaya thrice, worship the Sun. You will soon obtain victory in battle. This Mantra destroys all enemies and prolongs life. He who recites this Mantra is freed from danger, disease and fear."

Sri Rama meditated on the sun and recited the Mantra. Matali also said, "I shall remind Thee of the way by which Ravana can be killed. Do thou discharge the Brahma weapon for destroying Ravana. His head should not be cut off by Thee O Lord! He is not to be killed through the head but through the chest.

Thereupon Sri Rama discharged the Brahmastra carefully in order to pierce his breast. The arrow fell over Ravana's breast. It immediately tore up the heart of Ravana. That arrow killed Ravana and returned to Rama's quiver. The fight between Sri Rama and Ravana lasted for 12 days.

DEATH OF RAVANA AND AFTER

Then there was a shower of flowers on Sri Rama. The Munis, Sidhhas and the gods sang His praises.

Then there issued forth a light effulgent like the sun from the body of Ravana and entered the body of Sri Rama in the sight of all the gods and others.

The gods said, "Oh! How fortunate is Ravana. We are endowed with Sattva. We are objects of the grace of Vishnu and yet we are subject to fear, misery and the like. We are sunk in the world. On the contrary this cruel Rakshasa, who was the killer

of Brahmanas, who was endowed with the quality of Tamas, lover of other people's wives, enemy of Vishnu and killer of ascetics entered Rama in the sight of all beings."

Narada appeared on the scene and said to the gods, "Ravana thought of Rama only day and night on account of his enmity with Rama. Knowing that his death was to be brought about by Rama, he saw from fear Rama everywhere. He had Vaira-bhakti. In his dreams also he always saw Rama. As he was killed by Rama he was freed from all fetters and impurities and so he attained the eternal abode of Vishnu.

Even a great sinner who is endowed with evil qualities, who is fond of other peoples' wealth and belongings, if he always remembers Sri Rama, he is freed from all kinds of faults that pertain to this course of worldly life. He attains purity and goes to the supreme abode of Vishnu. May Sri Rama who is effulgent like a million suns, who is adored by the gods and Yogis and devotees protect us."

Sri Rama asked Vibhishana to perform the funeral rites of his brother. Vibhishana did it accordingly. Sri Rama asked Lakshmana to instal Vibhishana on the throne of Lanka. Lakshmana carried out the orders of Sri Rama.

Hanuman, according to the instructions of Sri Rama informed Sita of the victory of Sri Rama and the death of Ravana. Vibhishana brought Sita in a palanquin before her Lord. Sita prostrated at the lotus feet of Sri Rama.

Lest anything should be said against her character, Sita had to pass through a severe ordeal of

fire. Then Rama declared her to be without any blemish. Rama, Lakshmana, Sita, Hanuman and others returned to Ayodhya in a Viman .

Sri Vasishtha aided by the Brahmins installed Sri Ram on the throne. All rejoiced heartily. Rama reigned the kingdom in a just manner. There were peace, prosperity and happiness everywhere.

7. UTTARA KANDA

Kala (Time) took the form of a Muni, approached Sri Rama and said, "I have to speak to Thee on a very secret subject. Let no one else know it. Let no one else be told of it. Should any one else hear it or see us talking, he should meet with death at Thy hands."

Sri Rama replied, "O Time! very well." Thereupon He said to Lakshmana "beloved brother! stand at the door. Do not allow anyone to enter inside. Should any one come he shall meet with death at my hands. There is no doubt in this."

Then Rama said to the Muni. "Now let us hear thy message." The Muni said, "I have been sent by Brahma. I am, O Lord, the first born of Thy sons. I was born of thee, through association with Maya. I am called Time (Kala), the destroyer of all. Brahma has sent this message to Thee "The time has now come for Thee to protect the kingdom of heavens. Ravana has been killed. Thy object has been achieved and the period of Thy life amongst men is over."

Sri Rama replied, "My wish is also the same. My object has been achieved. I am ready for doing the work of the gods."

Now the Rishi Durvasa came to the entrance of the palace and said, "O Lakshmana ! I have got some urgent business with Sri Rama. Please tell Sri Rama of my arrival."

Lakshmana replied, "Sri Rama is talking now with somebody. Kindly wait for a moment." Durvasa became very angry and said, "If you do not allow me to see Rama this very moment, I shall burn the whole family and kingdom to ashes."

Lakshmana thought that his own death was preferable to the destruction of all through Durvasa. Having thus resolved he went to Rama and informed him of the arrival of sage Durvasa.

Sri Rama at once dismissed Kala and came outside to receive Durvasa, the son of Atri. He paid due respects to the Rishi and said, "What can I do for thee ?"

Durvasa said, "O Valiant Rama ! To-day I have completed my fast of a thousand years. I want food now."

Sri Rama at once gave him the food. The Rishi took the food and went away happily.

Sri Rama remembered what he had said in the presence of Kala. He was sunk in sorrow. Lakshmana said, "O my beloved brother ! Abandon all grief on account of me. Kill me now. I am ready. Do not break thy sacred vow. Do not deviate a jot from the path of Dharma."

Sri Rama called all his ministers. He informed Sri Vasishtha about the coming of Durvasa, the message of Kala and his own vow."

Sri Vasishtha and the ministers said, "We have already known through the eye of knowledge about the separation from Lakshmana that had been ordained in days of yore. Do not violate thy vow. Abandon Lakshmana at once. Shouldst Thou break Thy promise, Dharma will be destroyed. If Dharma is destroyed all the three worlds will be destroyed. Thou art the upholder of all the worlds. Abandon Lakshmana and protect the world."

Sri Rama said, "O Lakshmana! Go wherever thou pleasest. Let there be no destruction of virtue. Banishment and death of the good are both equal."

Sri Lakshmana made prostrations unto Sri Rama and repaired to the banks of Sarayu. He closed all the nine gates of the body and took his Prana to the head. He then meditated on the immortal supreme Brahman. All the gods and the Rishis threw flowers over Lakshmana and praised him.

Indra carried Lakshmana to heaven. All the chief gods and the Celestial Rishis worshipped him. He resumed the form of Sesha. Brahma and other Yogis of the Sidha Loka were in great joy.

The departure of Rama

Sri Rama said to his ministers and Sri Vasishtha, "I shall install Bharata as king today and follow the path of Lakshmana." Bharata said, "O my Lord! I do not desire for kingdom either in the heavens or on the earth without Thee. Surely I will follow Thee. Do thou instal Kusa as king of Kosal and Lava of Uttara. Let messengers speedily go to bring Satrugna. Let him hear of our departure to Vaikuntha."

On hearing these words of Sri Rama and Bharata all the people who assembled there fell on the ground and became unconscious. After some time they regained their consciousness. Thereupon Sri Vasishtha said to Sri Rama, "O dear Rama! All the people are lying of the ground in a senseless state. Show Thy grace on them."

Sri Rama said to them, "What shall I do for you all?" They said with folded hands, "We shall go wherever thou goest." Sri Rama said to the people, "Let it be so."

Sri Rama sent messengers to bring Kusa and Lava. Lava and Kusa reached Ayodhya in time. Sri Rama installed them as kings of Kosal and Uttara. Sri Rama sent messengers to bring Satrugna. The messengers informed Satrugna of the advent of Kala, visit of Durvasa, the departure of Lakshmana, the vow of Sri Rama and the installation of his sons. Satrugna called his sons and installed Subahu in Mathura and Yupketu in Videsha. He then went to Ayodhya to see Sri Rama. He bowed at the lotus feet of Lord Rama and said, "I installed my two sons in the kingdom there. I have resolved to accompany Thee wherever Thou goest. I am devoted to Thee. Thou shouldst not forsake me." Sri Rama said, "Be ready. You can accompany Me."

Many monkeys, Rakshasas, bears etc., suddenly appeared before Sri Rama and said, "It is our firm resolve to follow Thee wherever Thou goest. Sri Rama said, "Yes you can all accompany Me."

Sugriva also appeared. He bowed to Sri Rama and said, "I installed Angada in the kingdom. I have resolved to follow Thee."

Sri Rama said to Vibhishana, "My beloved devotee ! so long as the earth endures do thou rule the people in the kingdom of the Rakshasas."

Thereupon Sri Rama said to Hanuman, "O son of wind ! O Mighty Hero ! do thou live for many long years." He said to Jambavanta "Do thou stay in this earth till the end of Dwapara Yuga."

Then Sri Rama went out of the town. Bharata, ministers, leading Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, all the monkeys with Sugriva at their head and several others followed Sri Rama.

On the left of Rama there was Lakshmi. On the right went the goddess of earth. Weapons and Sastras, bows and arrows walked in front of him in their embodied forms.

All the Vedas took human forms and accompanied him. The blessed Mother of the Vedas, Gayatri together with Pranava OM, followed by Hari along with the Vyahritis, Bhu, Bhuvah, Swah, Janah, Maha, Tapas, and Satyam. All the people of Ayodhya together with their sons, wives also followed him.

Sri Rama reached the river Sarayu. Brahma came there together with all the gods, Rishis and Siddhas. Fragrant breezes blew ; there was a shower of flowers from the sky.

Brahma said, "O Lord Rama ! Thou art the the supreme Lord. Thou art Vishnu, the embodiment of bliss. Having entered together with Thy brothers, the body of the One, Primeval Lord Hari, do thou rule the gods."

Sri Rama became the Lord Vishnu of four arms with conch, mace, discus and lotus. Lakshmana assumed the form of Sesha. Bharata and Satrugna

4. Relationship of Hanuman with Sri Rama

देह बुद्ध्यास्तु दासोऽस्मि जीवबुद्ध्या त्वदंशकः ।

आत्मदृष्ट्या त्वमेवाहं इति मे निश्चिता मतिः ॥

Hanuman says: "Looked at from the point of view of the body I am Thy slave, from the point of view of the embodied self a portion of Thy energy, from the point of view of the Atma Thy own Self. This is my settled belief."

SECTION IV

CHARACTERS OF THE

RAMAYANA

1. SRI RAMA.

Rama was Lord Hari himself incarnate on earth for the destruction of Ravana. He was well accomplished, beautiful and endowed with royal marks. He was the foremost of those who were skilled in bows and arrows. He was born of the Ishwaku line. He had his sway all over the world.

He had eyes like lotus petals and a countenance like full moon. His arms were long and beautiful. He had broad shoulders. His eyes were red. He had a deep voice. He had equally proportionate limbs. His gait was slow and majestic. It was that of a lion. He had four lines on his thumb. He had a pointed nose. He had high forehead.

His glory and prowess were unlimited. He was peerless on earth. He was free from malice. He was gentle and the protector of his people. He always addressed the people in gentle words. He never used any harsh words even when somebody addressed him rudely.

He was wise and virtuous. He was effulgent like the sun, in forgiveness like the earth, in intelligence like Brihaspati, in frame like Vasava, in prowess like Indra. He observed ascetic vows and honoured saints. He would forget hundreds of evils done to him but would gratefully remember a single act of kindness, ever shown.

In the leisure of his martial exercises, he had discussions on the Shastras with the wise and the

aged people. He always followed the right in every walk of his life and never swerved from his royal duties.

If anybody would approach him he would talk to him first. He was exceedingly powerful but never haughty for that. He was the upholder of the four castes. He conferred honour upon people. He was worshipped by all. He was well-versed in polity and was greatly devoted to the Brahmins.

He was friend of the poor and chastiser of the wicked. He was a cosmic benefactor. He was well-versed in religion, social customs and laws. He looked after the welfare of his subjects and the people too loved him immensely. He never indulged in profane and irrelevant talks. He had mastery over Yajurveda, Dhanur Veda, the Vedangas etc. Whenever people put a question to him he answered them wisely like Brihaspati. He was skilful in the use of all arms. He was honoured by the scholars of the Vedas. He was proficient in philosophy and poetry.

He never spoke a lie even in extreme danger or peril. He was brave, candid, and modest. He was the source of all good. He always respected his superiors. He was free from idleness. He was ever vigilant. He sought no evil. He had perfect control over anger.

He was ever ready to keep a vigilant watch over his own faults. He had aged and pious Brahmins for his guide.

He was an expert rider, a great warrior, a valiant general. He had great skill in the military manœuvres. He was unconquered even by the gods. He was free from the evil habit of carping.

Sri Rama is an Avatar of Lord Hari. Lakshmana is an Avatar of Adisesha. Bharata and Satrugna are Avatars of conch and discus, Sita is an Avatar of Sri Lakshmi.

Sri Rama possessed red eyes and arms that were sinewy. His steps were like those of an elephant. He had long arms, broad shoulders and black and curly hair. He was valiant and glowing with splendour. He was in no way inferior to Indra himself in battle. He was well-versed in holy scriptures and equal to Brihaspati in wisdom. He was skilled in every science. He was an object of love and reverence with all people. He had his senses under perfect control. Even his enemies were pleased to see Him. He was the terror of the wicked and the protector of the virtuous. He was endowed with keen intelligence. He could never be vanquished by anyone.

He kicked off the throne and the pleasures of the senses and the world to fulfil the words of his father.

If Rama would have longed for the throne, it was quite easy for him to get it. He was very popular. He was the mightiest of heroes; He destroyed the Rakshasas and bent the tremendous bow of Lord Siva. But he did not show the least physical force. He gladly accepted what was dictated by the cruel and wicked Kaikeyi. Throne possessed less fascination for him than the obedience to his father's behests. He kicked off the kingdom and the comforts of a king. He gladly accepted the exile. The laudable virtues of Sri Rama cannot be adequately described.

Of all the four brothers Sri Rama was a paragon of virtues. He was not only kind and affectionate but generous and considerate of feelings for all around him. He had a splendid physique and winning manners. He had a magnanimous personality. He was extremely noble, generous, chivalrous and fearless. He was very simple and absolutely free from ostentation.

Sri Rama's life was a life of holy obedience of stainless purity, of matchless simplicity, laudable contentment, commendable self-sacrifice and remarkable renunciation. He paid equal respect to his mother and his step-mothers and revered his Guru.

Sita once told Rama to seek shelter in a safe place and to let the forest dwellers alone as there was much danger there. Rama's reply revealed his firm determination to adhere to truth and to his duty as a king to protect those who took shelter under Him. Sri Rama said, "O Sita, I may even give up life or you or Lakshmana but can never give up the performance of my word given particularly to helpless Brahmins. Rama speaks but once and never fails to keep up his promise."

Sri Rama was happy in adversity, calm in miseries, intrepid in dangers.

Rama was a mighty hero. He was the hero of heroes. He killed single-handed great and renowned warriors like Khara and Dushana. He vanquished the invincible Vali.

He was an ideal king. He ruled the kingdom in a wonderful way. He was just and righteous. He was courageous and kind. He was endowed with a

gentle and generous disposition. He was civil and courteous.

Therefore his subjects loved him immensely. Not a single man was unhappy during his regime. He often used to say, "I will do anything and everything to please my subjects and if necessary I can even abandon my dear wife for their sake." That is the reason why his reign was called "Rama Rajya". There were not dacoits during his regime. All led a virtuous life. Nobody spoke any untruth. Anybody could place a bag of gold or jewels even in the main street. No one would touch it even.

2. SITA DEVI.

Raja Janaka, the famous King of Mithila, the reputed sage and Raja Rishi, whose conversation with sage Yagnavalkya appears in the Brihadaran-yaka Upanishad was tilling a plot of land for the purpose of performing a Yagna to get a son. Sita Devi was found inside the ploughshare. She was named Sita because she was got from Sut (furrow).

The beautiful child was taken to the palace and was nursed very carefully. Gradually as the years rolled on she became an accomplished girl of remarkable beauty and virtues.

One day Sita was playing with a small ball. One of her playmates kicked the ball forcibly and it went underneath the great bow of Lord Siva. No body could take the ball from underneath the bow. Now Sita came near the bow and lifted the bow with ease and asked one of her fellow playmates to go inside and bring the ball. Raja Janaka was noticing this game of Sita and wondered at her extraordinary strength. The bow of Siva was very

heavy and even ten persons could not move it from one place to another. So King Janaka determined to give Sita in marriage only to him who could lift and bend the great bow of Siva.

Raja Janaka wanted to give Sita in marriage to a worthy prince. But he was not able to get a suitable match. He proposed to marry her to one who would lift, bend and string the great bow of Lord Siva and proclaimed his intention far and wide. Many princes came to Mithila but they were not able to even lift the bow.

Vishwamitra took Rama and Lakshmana to Mithila and introduced them to Raja Janaka and informed him of their mission. The great bow which many reputed and strong princes had failed even to lift up was then brought before a large assembly by a number of strong and robust men with great difficulty. Sri Rama lifted the bow easily, broke it in his attempt to stringing the bow. Sita immediately put the garland around the neck of Sri Rama.

Sita was then married to Sri Rama with great pomp and eclat. She took a vow to remain faithful to her husband till the end of her life and to carry out his commands even at the risk of her life.

Sri Rama requested Sita to stay at home on the eve of his departure to forest. She did not agree. She was quite aware of the duties of a faithful and devoted wife. She was an ideal wife. She was not an ordinary woman. She was a goddess. She was the incarnation of Lakshmi. The purity of her life was beyond description.

Sita said, "O beloved husband. Scriptures declare that the wife alone should share the fate of her husband. Therefore I should live with Thee in

the forest. Husband is the mainstay for a woman. He is her all in all. He is her only support or sole refuge. As is the kingdom without a king, the body without life and river without water, so is a woman without her husband. The shade of her husband's feet is preferable to residence in mansions. There is nothing in the three worlds for a woman to possess when compared to her husband. Wealth, jewelleries, costly dresses, palatable foods, celestial cars are useless without Thee, O Lord ! I have been taught from my very childhood to follow my husband under all circumstances and conditions of life. I shall certainly carry out now what I have been taught. I will spend my days quite happily with Thee under the shade of trees which is better than palace. I will ever think of the services that are to be rendered to Thee. I will have no other thoughts than these. Wherever you are, that is the spacious heaven for me. I cannot bear your separation even for a second."

Sri Rama said, " O my sweet Sita ! you will have to encounter immense difficulties in the forest. There are wild beasts and cannibals. The path is very thorny. You will have to live on roots and leaves. Therefore abandon the idea of following me to the forest."

Sri Sita replied, " O my venerable Lord ! I shall welcome gladly all sorts of difficulties. I will develop many good qualities through sufferings and miseries. The thorns will be as soft to me as a bed of roses, the shade of a tree more comfortable than a mansion when I live with Thee. The deities of the forest will love me and take care of me as father-in-law and mother-in-law. I will serve Thee untiringly in

the forest. Beasts and cannibals will not dare to come near me when I live with Thee. Thou art my divinity. I will certainly follow Thee. I shall give up my life without Thee, O Lord !”

Sri Rama had to yield to the wishes of Sita. Thereupon Sri Rama, Lakshmana and Sita bade good-bye to their relations, friends and subjects and repaired to the forest.

Sita heard the cry of Maricha and asked Lakshmana to run towards Rama. Lakshmana said, “ O venerable mother ! Be not troubled. Be not anxious. There is none in this world to do any harm to Lord Rama. He is invincible. You will see Him in a second.” Sita suspected the pure hearted Lakshmana and rebuked him, “ Your evil object shall never be fulfilled. I would rather kill myself with a weapon or throw myself from the top of a hill or enter into a blazing fire than live with a wretch like you.”

Lakshmana at once ran towards Rama. Ravana took this golden opportunity and appeared before Sita in the guise of a Sannyasi with shaven head. The noble and pious Sita offered him seat and welcomed him with fruits and roots. Then the wicked Ravana assumed his own form and said “ O Sita ! I am the king of Rakshasas. I am Ravana by name. I am the king of Lanka. Become my wife, you can happily live with me.”

Sita replied, “ O wicked Ravana ! How dare you to speak to me thus. Do not talk such unbecoming words. If you are courageous enough stay here awhile till the arrival of my Lord and you will reap the fruits of your evil intentions.”

Ravana kept Sita in the Asoka garden. She lived on fruits and roots and practised severe austerities. She was ever thinking of her Lord. She was guarded by hideous Rakshasa women. These women tormented Sita in a variety of ways, used very harsh words and threatened to eat her up.

One day the wicked Ravana dressed himself beautifully and went to the Asoka garden. He addressed Sita, "O Lady! be merciful to me. I am the son of that Rishi Visravas of high ascetic merit. Visravas was the son of Pulasthya Rishi. Pulasthya Rishi was the son of Brahma himself. Such is my lineage. I am famous as the fifth regent of the universe. Be my queen."

Sita replied, "I am ever devoted to my husband. Your father is a wise Brahmana born of Brahma. Why do you not lead a virtuous life? You are bringing disgrace on your brother Kubera. Are you not ashamed to speak such unbecoming words? Your object will never be fulfilled. I kick at thy kingdom, pomp and glory. Restore me to my Lord and ask his pardon. Otherwise you will be destroyed along with your kinsmen."

Ravana said, "I allow one year for you to think and give your consent to live with me. If you do not agree to it, I will kill you after the expiry of that period."

Sita spent her days in great distress. Ten months had passed.

Hanuman proceeded to Asokavan and found Sita Devi. He presented the ring given to him by Sri Rama. She rejoiced very much when she saw the ring. She enquired everything about her Lord.

Hanuman said, "O venerable mother! I will carry thee on my back to Thy Lord." Sita replied, "I cannot come without the command of my Lord. I can only come if he comes and takes me. Further I cannot touch the body of another man. Tell my Lord to come here personally and free me from this confinement. Take this Chudamani and give it to him."

Sri Rama said to Hanuman, "Go to Sita and convey to her the happy news of the fall of Lanka and death of Ravana. Hanuman carried out the command of his Lord. Sita was immensely delighted. She replied, "Tell my Lord, O Hanuman that I am anxious to see him at once."

Sri Hanuman went back to Sri Rama and told him what Sita had wished him to say. Thereupon Sri Rama asked Vibhishana to bring Sita to him.

Vibhishana went to the Asokavan and brought Sri Sita to the presence of Sri Rama. Sita prostrated before her Lord.

Sri Rama said, "Beloved Sita! It was my duty to recover thee and to punish the wicked Ravana. Therefore I killed Ravana and brought you back. You had been living in the house of a stranger. How then can a man of high family like myself take you back? How can I accept you as my wife? I have to renounce you. Go wherever you like. You are quite free now."

Sita said, "If I entertained any thought of any other man even for a moment except Thyself thy order would not have affected me. I spent my weary days in the Asokavan, ever thinking of Thee alone. I led a rigid ascetic life. You have not made any enquiry before passing this sentence. I am not

an ordinary woman. I am the daughter of the mighty and pious king Janaka. I am a mistress in the family of the great Raghu. I am the wife of that luminous star of the solar dynasty, Sri Rama. You have forgotten all about this while passing the cruel sentence on me? I am not at all afraid of death even. You have brought against me the charge of unchastity and you have declared this before an assembly of great personages. I cannot die with this ignominy! O Lakshmana, kindly prepare my funeral pile at once. If I am really unchaste, if I have ever thought of anybody else save my Lord, my body will be burnt down to ashes; but if I am pure, if my mind has always thought of my lord, the fire would not even touch me, I shall go through this ordeal and then gladly obey the royal command."

Hearing these words Lakshmana looked at his brother with a grieved heart. Sri Rama at once ordered him to do as Sita had wished.

The funeral pile was prepared. Sita entered the fire fearlessly. The god of fire held Sita in his arms and came out of the fire. He said, "O Rama! This is Thy Sita. She is quite pure and innocent. Therefore accept her as thy wife. She is attached to Thee. She has never, even in her dream, thought of any other person for a moment. Your suspicion is groundless. No one in this world has hitherto dared to undergo such a severe ordeal." So saying Agni, the god of fire vanished.

Sri Rama said, "O noble Site! This was a great ordeal. You have come out successful. Thou hast shown to the world what superhuman deeds a really devoted and chaste wife can perform. Gods

have made you an example of an ideal wife." So saying Sri Rama caught hold of Sita's hand with intense affection and joy. Sita put the dust of her Lord's feet on her head.

Sri Rama installed Vibhishana on the throne of Lanka. Thereupon Sri Rama, Laksmana, Vibhishna, Sugriva, Sita left for Ayodhya on the Pushpaka Viman (aerial car), as the period of fourteen years of exile had already expired.

Bharata with his party came in advance to receive his brothers. Sri Rama, his brother and Sita saw Kaikeyi and paid their respects. On an auspicious day Sri Rama ascended the throne with great pomp and eclat and commenced to discharge his sacred duties of a king.

In course of time Sita became quick with the child. One day Sri Rama asked her "Tell me what thou wishest now." Sita replied, "My venerable Lord ! I wish to visit the holy cottages of the saints in the forest and talk to the ladies." Sri Rama agreed and made preparation to send her away with Lakshman the next day.

Sri Rama had sent people to all parts of his kingdom to find out the intentions and condition of his subjects. Sri Rama asked Durmukh, "What news have you brought to-day ? Durmukh replied, "All thy subjects are happy in thy reign, O Lord. All extol thee for thy justice but some blame thee for keeping Sita in the palace. She had been in the house of Ravana for a long time and Thou hast accepted her without making due enquiry as to her purity. The example which Thou hast set will produce an evil influence on the women of thy

kingdom as they will give support to their own misconduct." When Sri Rama heard this, he was very much afflicted at his heart.

He went out for a walk. When he was passing by the side of a tank he saw two washermen washing clothes and quarrelling with each other. One washerman is the father-in-law and the other is the son-in-law. The father-in-law said, "Your father was rich and respectable. So I gave my daughter to you in marriage. But you are cruel. You beat her severely and so she left you. She is now living with me. She is young and beautiful. She should not remain aloof from you." The son-in-law replied, "Your daughter does not like to live with me. She wants to live with you only. Sita, the wife of Sri Rama, was abducted by Ravana. She lived in Lanka for a long time but Sri Rama welcomed her back to his home without any hesitation. He is the king and so nobody would question or blame him. But we are poor people and if we deviate even a bit from the path of right conduct we are at once blamed and censured by our relations and friends and banished from the society."

Sri Rama overheard this conversation and became drowned in grief. He reflected within himself, "I know that Sita is chaste, pure, and faithful and yet I shall have to part with her in order to carry on the administration of the kingdom with justice."

He returned to the palace and said to Lakshmana "My beloved brother! My subjects blame me for keeping Sita in the palace as they think her to be unchaste. I have pledged my words to rule over them in a just manner and make them happy. There-

fore I have made up my mind to banish Sita. Take her to the forest and leave her there.

Lakshmana shed tears and said, "My venerable Lord ! Sita passed through a severe ordeal. The god of fire proclaimed about her innocence and absolute chastity."

Sri Rama replied, "I am quite aware that Sita is perfectly innocent and chaste but my subjects have not witnessed the ordeal. Therefore they will not believe this. I must fulfil my sacred vow faithfully. I must sacrifice my self-interest.

Lakshmana replied, "The fire ordeal took place in the presence of a big assembly. The news ought to have reached the ears of the people of this place. This world contains scandal-mongers and back-biters. Even the gods cannot please them. I have opened my heart to Thee. I am Thy humble and obedient servant. I am ever ready to carry out Thy commands."

Sri Rama replied, "I have reflected over the matter very deeply. O Lakshmana ! take her to the forest tomorrow morning without fail but do not tell her that I have banished her till you have reached the other side of the Ganges."

Lakshmana carried out the behests of Sri Rama. They crossed the Ganges in a boat. When they entered the dense forest Lakshmana wept bitterly. Sita said, "O Lakshmana ! what is the cause of your grief ?"

Lakshmana replied, "O venerable mother ! How can I communicate the heart-rending news to thee ? My brother has abandoned thee on account of public opinion as to thy chastity because you remained in

the house of Ravana alone for a long time. I have brought thee here for banishment under His orders.”

Sita expressed her feelings thus, “ O Lord, thou knowest that Sita is chaste, faithful and ever-devoted unto Thee. Thou hast abandoned her to avoid a bad name. It is her duty to avoid all censure and infamy to Thee, because thou art her sole and excellent shelter. O Lakshmana ! tell Sri Rama that a king must acquire virtue by protecting his subjects. This is the highest morality. Sita is born to undergo life-long troubles, difficulties and sorrows. Destiny willed it so. Sita is not at all sorry for herself. She is not at all displeased with Him. He must be naturally anxious and perturbed in her absence. Comfort him in all possible ways. Although he has sent her in exile yet tell him not to banish her from his heart. She will ever think of her Lord only. She will enthrone Him in her heart and worship Him day and night. Wherever she resides, He is ever present with her. He is Master. She is His servant. He is the preceptor. She is His disciple. He is God. She is His devotee. He is the Lord. She is the subject. He is the king of Ayodhya. She is an ascetic named Rama Priya.”

What an ideal wife Sita was ! Every word that came out of her mouth expresses deep reverence unto Her husband and sublime sentiments. These words should be engraved in the tablet of heart of every woman. No other woman save Sita could have given expression to such soul-stirring and magnanimous thoughts in such a sad and critical state.

Sita Devi began to weep bitterly. Lakshmana came back to Ayodhya. Some boys of the

neighbouring hermitage accidentally came to the spot where Sita Devi was weeping. They at once went to Maharishi Valmiki and said "One lady is quite alone and is weeping on the banks of the Ganges."

Maharishi Valmiki at once repaired to the spot and said, "O lady! Do not weep. Be cheerful. I shall now take you to my Ashram and give you all comforts. You will have companions too."

Sita prostrated at the feet of the Maharishi and followed him to his hermitage. She was introduced to the ladies of the Ashram.

Sita gave birth to beautiful twins after some months. Maharishi Valmiki named the twins as Kusha and Lava. He gave them good secular and religious education. He taught them archery and music. They could sing the Ramayana composed by the Maharishi in the most charming manner.

Sri Rama wanted the Maharishi to attend the Aswamedha Yagna. Maharishi took the twins also. He ordered the boys to chant the Ramayana in the street, temples, public places and private residences of nobles. The people of Ayodhya were struck with wonder and admiration at their charming music. The news reached Sri Rama. He wanted to hear their song. The boys appeared in the council hall and chanted Ramayana. Sri Rama came to know that the boys were the disciples of Maharishi Valmiki. Maharishi Valmiki related the whole story about the boys. He further added, "Sita is a perfectly pure lady. Thou shouldst take her back. She is quite willing to take an oath about her fidelity or faithfulness unto Thee."

Sri Rama agreed to this. One morning Sita appeared before a public assembly and said with

humility "O mother earth ! Kindly give me a place in Thy heart, as I have never thought of anybody else save Sri Rama. O gracious Mother ! I have always been worshipping my Lord Sri Rama by my words, deeds and thoughts. Grant me a resting place in Thy bosom."

Mother earth at once gave way. A handsome lady with divine effulgence and splendour came out of the cleft in the earth. She took Sita in her arms with great affection and love and disappeared in the twinkling of an eye. The spectators were struck with awe and wonder.

Sita was the daughter of the mother earth. She came out of earth in Mithila and went back into the earth. Sita possessed like her mother Earth the sterling qualities of power of endurance, patience, self-sacrifice and forbearance to a wonderful degree.

She could not be happy even for a day. Her life has been a life of life-long miseries. She suffered countless troubles in Lanka. How heroically she bore all troubles and sorrows ? She did not at all feel the injustice of her husband's conduct when she was cruelly banished into the dense forest even when she was in her family way although her chastity was proved by the severe fire ordeal.

Sita Devi was the most virtuous, chaste and pious lady the world has ever produced. Her life career was a brilliant one though it was full of adversities and sufferings. Sita was cheerful amidst sufferings and troubles which could not even be imagined. She was put to severe tests. She was tried in the furnace and proved to be perfectly pure. No one save Sita has stood against close scrutiny and the severest tests. She has been

declared absolutely chaste by the general consent of mankind also.

She was put to ignominy and shame. She was deprived of her personal comforts. She was ill-treated in the Asokavan by the Rakshasi women. Ravana threatened to take her life by the sword. She entered the fire. She was banished into the dense forest. She bore all these sufferings through the power of her chastity. Chastity can do and undo things. Chastity is a mighty power on this earth. Its potency is beyond description.

Ages have passed away and yet the chaste life of Sita Devi continues to exercise a wholesome influence on the lives and character of Indian ladies. Her ideal life of purity continues to produce interest, admiration and reverence in our minds and the readers of the Ramayana.

May the women of India and the whole world at large profit themselves by following the ideal and chaste life led by Sita. May they make their lives sublime and happy. May they shine like Sita ! May the blessings of Sita be upon you all. May we all sing Sita's glory now.

“ Jaya Site, Jaya Site Site, Jaya Site, Jaya Sri Site ;

Jaya Rama, Jaya Rama Rama, Jaya Rama Jaya Sri Rama.”

Om Tat Sat.

3. LAKSHMANA.

Lakshmana, the son of Dasaratha by his second queen Sumitra, was the younger brother of Sri Rama. He was an Avatara of Adi Shesha. He was a constant companion of Rama both in pleasures and pains. They lived, dined, played and slept together. One could not bear the separation of the other. Lakshmana was a loving servant also of Sri Rama. He carried out Sri Rama's commands to the very letter. He lived in perfect obedience to Sri Rama.

Lakshmana had pure and unstinted brotherly love. His object of life was his service to his elder brother. Obedience to the commands of his brother was the motto of his life. He would not do anything without getting Rama's permission. He regarded Sri Rama as his God, Guru, father and mother. He followed Rama as the shadow follows the sun.

He was quite unselfish at heart. He abandoned all the comforts of royal life willingly only for the company of his brother. He served Rama's cause in all possible ways. He made Rama's cause his own. He sacrificed every personal consideration on the altar of brother's love. Sri Rama was his all in all. He could relinquish anything, his life even for the sake of Rama. He abandoned in a moment his mother, his wife and his royal comforts to follow Sri Rama and Sita in exile. What a magnanimous soul: What a great Tyagi he was! Here is an unprecedented example of a disinterested, noble and devoted soul in the history of the world who lived.

only to serve his brother. That is the reason why the readers of Ramayana eulogise Lakshmana for his pure and unique love towards his brother. Some eulogise Bharata, while others speak very highly of Hanuman, but Lakshmana was in no way inferior to Bharata or Hanuman.

Lakshmana followed Sri Rama for the long period of fourteen years though he was perfectly aware of the dangers of the forest life. He accompanied Rama with his bow and arrow though his help was not required by Vishwamitra. It was all due to his devotion and love towards his brother Sri Rama.

Sri Rama also had intense love for Lakshmana. When Lakshmana fell down unconscious by the fatal arrow of Meghanada, Rama's heart was broken. He wept bitterly. He made a determination not to revisit Ajodhya when he lost his dear brother. He said, "Wife like Sita can be had, but a real, devoted brother of the type of Lakshmana cannot be had again. The world is nothing for me without my brother."

Lakshmana was pure in thought, word and deed. He led the life of an ideal Brahmachari during the fourteen years of exile. He never looked at the face or body of Sita. His eyes were ever directed towards her lotus-like feet only. He could not recognise the jewel and ornaments of Sita. He fought and killed the great hero Meghanada through his power of Brahmacharya. Meghanada, the son of Ravana, wielded great power, strength and skill in warfare. He had received a boon from the Gods that he would be killed only by one who maintained celibacy for 12 years without break.

Lakshmana became very furious against those who acted against the name and glory of Rama. At Chitrakute he made up his mind to kill Bharata when the news of Bharata's coming with his army was announced. He thought that Bharata was coming to destroy Rama in order to rule his kingdom without any fear. Rama said, "My beloved brother, Bharata is a pure and noble soul. He has intense devotion towards you and me. Abandon this misapprehension." Then only Lakshmana was pacified.

He became very indignant when he came to know that Sri Rama's rights to ascend the throne were taken away by Kaikeyi on behalf of her son. He would have destroyed Kaikeyi and Bharata if Rama had not pacified Lakshmana. Rama made Lakshmana clearly understand that the matter was purely providential that everything was controlled by the Lord and that destiny is inexorable.

During the exile Lakshmana worked day and night for Rama and Sita. He acted the part of a vigilant watchman when they were asleep. He brought fruits and roots from the forest. He attended to their bodily wants very carefully and attentively. He built a hut for them and made a wooden bridge over rivers. He was their most willing and obedient servant. There was nothing that he could not do for Rama. There was no sacrifice which he considered too great for the sake of Sri Rama.

Lakshmana said to Kausalya, "Mother! If Rama enters fire, I shall enter first. If he enters the forest, I shall also follow him. I cannot leave the company of Sri Rama, even for a second." What a great affection he bore towards Rama. This is

unrivalled in the history of the world. The world has not witnessed a brother like Lakshmana and it will not see in the future also.

Kaikeyi did not wish that Lakshmana should be sent in exile. Dasaratha did not order that Lakshmana should accompany his elder brother and yet Lakshmana of his own accord abandoned the pleasures of the palace and kingdom and followed his brother to the forest leaving all affection for his mother and wife. It is all due to the love and reverence he had for brother Sri Rama. He had no base motive in accompanying his elder brother. His life was a life of perfect dispassion and absolute renunciation.

Lakshmana was bold and fearless. His valour, prowess and strength were beyond description. He marched to the Dandaka forest along with his brother to kill the Rakshasas. He said to Sri Rama, "My venerable brother! I shall ward off all dangers which would beset you in the forest. I shall lead and clear the way with the bow and arrow in my hands.

"I shall remove all dangers on the way. I shall be Thy soldier and servant. I shall do everything for you. I shall bring for you fruits and roots. You will have to take rest. I shall watch when you and Sita are sleeping. Thou art my all in all. I want Thee alone. I do not yearn for heaven or worldly prosperity. Thou art my treasure and spiritual wealth. Thou art my very life and soul."

He encouraged his brother Rama in all possible ways and consoled him after Sita was taken away by Ravana. He assured him that he would recover

her after destroying Ravana. He never lost his courage and presence of mind. He had superhuman capacity for work and indefatigable energy. He wandered throughout the day in search of Sita. He never cared for his personal wants. His loyalty to Sri Rama was extremely laudable.

He was indeed very far-sighted. Rama was highly benefitted by Lakshmana's wise counsel. Once Sri Rama paid no heed to the advice of Lakshmana and he had to reap the bitter results. Lakshmana distinctly told Sri Rama not to chase the golden deer as it was a false one. Sri Rama ignored his words. What followed afterwards we all know.

Lakshmana stuck tenaciously to his principles and ideals. He had a thorough understandings of the situation. He would do the right thing at the right time. He had the sense of self-respect and self-confidence in him.

Lakshmana tried his level best to remove the grief of his brother and make him happy. Lakshmana was endowed with great power of self-reliance.

He exhibited remarkable valour, chivalry and heroism in the war. He destroyed countless Rakshasas. He never cared for his life.

He carried out the behests of his revered brother. He prepared the hot burning vessel for Sita's ordeal despite taunts. Further he undertook to leave Sita when she was in her family way in the forest, when Sri Rama wanted to banish Sita on account of the public censure.

Showers of calumnies were poured over his head. Censures were levelled against him. But he did not mind them. He bore them patiently and thought

that they were the outcome of a sacred cause. He was innocent. He lived only to carry out the commands of his brother. He was not heartless and unsympathetic. But he was a superman. These charges cannot in the least touch noble Laksmana. They cannot bring any infamy on him. They cannot in any way bring him down and mar his greatness. The acts done by him on the contrary bespeak of his glory. They augment his reverence in the eyes of the readers of Ramayana and posterity.

The life of Lakshmana is highly inspiring and extremely soul-stirring. He has left an indelible impression on the human minds. Derive the best possible lessons from his life, put them in practice in your daily life and be happy. Develop love for your brothers. Develop universal brotherhood. Love all as your brother. This is a great lesson—you should derive from the life of Lakshmana. Try to tread in the footsteps of Lakshmana.

Mark the devotion of Lakshmana unto Lord Rama. On the contrary what do you see in these days? Brothers fight against themselves in trifling matters and go to the courts for division of property. They will quarrel for nothing at all and will not talk to each other. We see much intrigue and discord among them. Is this not a disgraceful and lamentable state of affairs? O Man! think of the majestic personality of Lakshmana and his devotion and love to his brother. Place him as an ideal before you. Imbibe his sterling qualities. Study his life and deeds again and again. Your vile nature will be gradually changed. Learn to love your brothers unselfishly. Make your wavering love firm. You will enjoy, peace and happiness at home.

O noble Lakshmana ! who regarded brotherly affection above everything else in this world, O indomitable hero ! Thy sense of duty and pure love towards Rama has immortalised Thy name. We cannot think of Sri Rama without thinking of you. You were the apple of His eye. You were His right hand. You are only another form of Sri Rama, like Bharata. As long as this world exists, so long your name also will exist. You will live as long as Rama does. You have earned undying reputation through your untiring service—and devotion—to Thy brother. Show us the way to serve and love Rama like you. Deign to reveal to us the secrets of service unto Rama. Salutations unto Thee, O Lakshmana ! May we walk in thy footsteps ! Give us a helping hand in crossing this terrible ocean of Samsara by bestowing upon us the true love and devotion unto Rama which you possess.

We shall ever sing thy glory and repeat :—

“ Rama, Lakshmana, Janaki Jaya bolo Hanumanaki.” Introduce us to our beloved Lord Rama, thy dear brother and master. Help us also in holding communion with Lord Rama. O Lakshmana ! be ever merciful on those neophyte Sadhaks who grope in the darkness of ignorance ! Teach us the secret of success and help us in becoming staunch celibates till the end of our lives ! Once again salutations to thee O Lakshmana, the darling of Sumitra and the apple of Sri Rama’s eyes !

Om Santi ! Santi ! Santi !

4. BHARATA.

Bharata the son of Dasaratha by his youngest queen Kaikeyi was a great Bhakta of Sri Rama. He was born under the sign of Pisus (Mean) and influence of Pushya planet, the eighth mans on in the Hindu Zodiac.

He was very well trained in the art of archery, horsemanship etc. He had the knowledge of the Vedas. He loved Satrugna immensely. Both dined together and put on the same dress. They were inseparable like body and shadow.

Bharata was much devoted to Sri Rama. You could not find in the history of the world one equal to Bharata in brotherly love. His dispassion was remarkable. He spurned sovereignty. Bharata's brotherly love towards Sri Rama is unique in this world and will ever remain noteworthy.

Bharata's Resolve.

When Vasishta said to Bharata, "My child, we shall today install thee as King by thy father's command. Bharata replied, "O venerable sage! What shall I do with the kingdom? I am a great sinner. I am not a fit person. My brothers and sister-in-law Janaki are undergoing untold miseries for my sake. I am very much afflicted at my heart on this score. Rama is our Lord and king. We are verily his servants. We shall go tomorrow morning to bring back Sri Rama immediately. Just as Rama repaired into the forest clad in barks, so I shall go into the

forest clad in barks. I will eat fruits and roots together with Satrugna. I will sleep on the ground and wear matted hair. I shall stay there till Rama's return. I solicit your kind permission to go. Please shower on me your cordial benediction."

What a touching reply Bharata gave ! His love and devotion for his brother were unparalleled. His noble example will continue to teach men. He was endowed with matchless virtues. That is the reason why he still lives in our hearts.

Bharata with the help of Guha crossed the Ganges and went immediately towards the Ashram of Bharadwaja and prostrated before the Rishi. The Rishi entertained the royal party with sumptuous food and drink. Bharata saluted the Rishi next morning and proceeded to Chitrakute to see Sri Rama.

Coming near to Chitrakute Bharata saw the footprints of Rama. He began to roll on the ground and reverentially placed the dust of Sri Rama's feet on his head. He left his chariot and began to walk barefooted with his feet bleeding, because his Lord, Rama had been walking all His way to forest.

When Lakshmana thought that Bharata was coming with his army as an enemy to kill them so that he might reign without any fear and when he was ready to fight with him, Sri Rama said to Lakshmana, "Bharata is my great devotee. I love him immensely. He can never entertain any evil intention against us. He is very noble and magnanimous. The world had not produced a single man possessing the qualifications of Bharata. Therefore abandon such wrong ideas from your mind."

From a distance Bharata saw the abode of Sri Rama. He bowed with great reverence to every object belonging to his brother and Sri Sita. Sri Rama was highly pleased when he saw Bharata. He kissed and caressed him with great affection.

The next morning Bharata said to Rama, "O venerable Lord, do thou instal thyself on the throne. Protect the ancestral kingdom. Thou art like a father unto me. Be thou gracious unto me. Do not think of the evil done by my wicked mother." Bharata placed his head with devotion at the feet of Sri Rama and prostrated himself on the ground before him.

Sri Rama lifted Bharata and said, "What you have said is right indeed. But I must obey my father's behests. He who disobeys his father's command and goes his own way is verily dead though living. He goes to hell after death. Therefore do thou protect the kingdom. I shall protect the kingdom of the Dandaka forest. The fear of untruth is greater than even that of hell to the great. I shall observe my father's promise made to Kaikeyi. How can I act untruthfully."

Bharata said, "I shall live in the forest clad in barks and rags. Protect the kingdom for fourteen years."

Rama replied, "The father gave the kingdom to thee and the forest to me. If I act otherwise, then I shall be acting untruthfully."

Bharata said, "I shall also live in the forest and serve thee like Lakshmana; otherwise I shall give up all food till I abandon the body."

Then Bharata went to Sri Rama, took his two sacred sandals, circumambulated Sri Rama

again and again, bowed to him reverentially and said with devotion, "O Rama, if, on the first day after the expiry of fourteen years, you do not return, I shall enter the fire."

Sri Rama said, "Very well, my beloved Bharata."

Bharata with his army, brother, mothers and sage Vasishta prepared to leave the place. Kaikeyi said to Rama with tears in her eyes, "Under the influence of delusion I deprived thee of thy kingdom, O Rama. Forgive my sin. I am a great sinner. The good are always of a forgiving nature. Protect me. Salutations unto Thee. I take refuge in Thee. Thou art Vishnu Himself."

Rama replied,

"The goddess of speech prompted by Me alone came out of thy mouth in order to do the work of the Gods. There is no fault of thine in it. Thou shalt be emancipated quickly by devotion unto Me."

Bharata with his ministers, and mother and sage Vasishta quickly returned to Ayodhya, thinking of Rama. He called the ministers and gave them valuable instructions, and entrusted them with the work of the different departments of the state. He also invited the Brahmins of the state, honoured them in various ways and asked them to carry on their duties properly. He established all the subjects of his kingdom in the towns and provinces of Ayodhya, consoled and comforted them and asked them to remain always loyal to the throne. He entrusted his mothers to the loving care of Satrugna.

The scared pair of sandals of Sri Rama was installed on the throne of Ayodhya with pomp and magnificence on an auspicious day.

Then he went to his preceptor Vasishta and asked his permission to lead the life of an ascetic and perform penance. With his permission he threw off his royal garments and put on barks. He went to Nandigram, built a hut there and dwelt like a hermit. He slept on a bed of straw and lived on roots and fruits with his senses under control, wearing matted locks. He used to worship daily the pair of sandals and never passed any state order without first soliciting permission from it. He devoutly worshipped the sandals daily as if they were Rama himself with flowers, rice and other kingly presents.

He renounced all pleasures of the world. He regarded the throne of Ayodhya as a sacred trust committed to his charge for some years. He conducted the affairs of the state in a virtuous and just manner. Counting the days and anxious for the return of Sri Rama, Bharata remained with his mind directed towards Sri Rama like a veritable Muni.

Bharat ruled the kingdom in the most able manner. He was extremely just and virtuous. There was peace everywhere. His sole aim had been to further the welfare and happiness of his subjects. All the subjects lived and revered Bharata.

Bharata recited always the name of Rama and Rama recited the name of Bharata. He was Rama himself in another form. Bharata worshipped his brother Sri Rama. He served him like a humble servant.

Fourteen years expired. Sri Rama was returning to Ayodhya. On the first day after the 14th year Bharata kept ready a big fire burning to enter into it if Sri Rama did not return to Ayodhya, before

sunset. Sri Rama knew this and sent Hanuman in advance to inform his brother about his arrival.

The news gave new life to Bharata. He put the pair of sandals on his head and proceeded to meet Sri Rama. Lakshmana and Sita Devi with Satrugna, Sri Vasishta, Sri Hanuman, Sumantra and other ministers.

That was a memorable meeting between the brothers. They embraced each other and shed tears of joy and love. Thereupon Sri Rama ascended the throne on an auspicious day with great pomp and eclat. He reigned for a long time peacefully and earned an everlasting name in the world. As a king he was second to none.

BHARATA'S SKILL IN ARCHERY.

When the famous battle between Sri Rama and Ravana was going on, Lakshmana was hit by a severe arrow of Meghanada or Indrajit, the son of Ravana. Lakshmana became unconscious. Sri Rama felt very sorry. After some time Vibhishana consoled Rama and said, "O my Lord! Lakshmana is unconscious. If only we can fetch the Mritasanjivini plant from the Mandara mountains and administer to Lakshmana, he can be saved. Otherwise we cannot expect Lakshmana back to life. The plant should be got before day break." Sri Rama requested Hanuman to get the plant as he was the only fit person to undertake such a difficult task. Mandara hills were thousands of miles away from Lanka.

Sri Hanuman with the blessings of Sri Rama left Lanka and in the twinkling of an eye he reached his destination. For him this was easier than crossing the ocean. He searched for the plant. He could not

trace out the plant. So he thought it wise to carry the whole mountain and place it before Sri Rama.

While Hanuman was carrying the mountain Bharata observed him. It was early morning hours and Bharata was offering worship to Sri Rama. Bharata thought to himself, "Some Rakshasa is moving in the sky with a big mountain to destroy my brother." So he at once shot an arrow at the demon and Hanuman fell down wounded with the mountain crying aloud "Rama, Rama". Bharata was astonished and went near Hanuman. Hanuman was unconscious. Bharata lamented over the sad condition of Hanuman and said, "The same inevitable destiny which has cruelly separated me from my brother has sent me this additional grief. If my devotion to Rama is sincere let this poor soul survive." Bharata sprinkled water over Hanuman repeating Rama, Rama and immediately Hanuman woke up uttering the names of Rama. Hanuman said, "O Bharata! you have done the greatest harm to Sri Rama. Lakshmana is on his death bed. I was taking the plant Mritsanjivini to save his life. Now I am delayed here and Lakshmana is sure to pass away within one hour." Bharata embraced Hanuman with tears in his eyes and said, "My brother! excuse me. I was under the impression that some demon is moving in the sky with the big mountain to destroy my brothers and mother Janaki. Do not feel sorry. In a moment's time I shall send you back to Lanka."

Saying thus the great hero Bharata aimed another arrow at the mountain. The arrow lifted the mountain together with Hanuman and kept them in front of Sri Rama before the appointed time. Hanuman was struck with wonder at the skill of Bharata and

narrated the incident to Sri Rama and others, who rejoiced immensely and shed tears of joy.

BHARATA'S SACRIFICE AND DEVOTION

No worldly gain, no attainment, not even the status of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh could deviate Bharata from the purity of his devotion to Sri Rama. To him Sri Rama was the way, the truth, the life and goal. He was ever ready to please Sri Rama and carry out his commands cheerfully. He never disobeyed Sri Rama under any circumstances. His watchword was obedience to his brother Sri Rama. His love and reverence towards his brothers is matchless in this world. You cannot find a second Bharata in the history of the world. The world has not produced his equal. Rama Himself was not capable of describing the love which Bharata had for him.

The spirit of self-sacrifice was ingrained in him. He did not care for the rights of royalty and kingdom. He abandoned them in favour of his absent brother. He led the life of an ascetic. No one else could have done like this.

He practised self-denial and endurance. He spurned the pomp and glory of royalty. He was meek and simple. He was a great Tyagi. He relinquished all the pleasures of the world, like straw and cultivated divine qualities. Rama was his sole delight and joy.

Bharata's life is an object lesson for all. His life teaches us that we should love our brothers and that we should lead a life of self-sacrifice, self-denial, of austere penances, dispassion and devotion and that we should discharge our duties with faith, care

diligence and disinterestedness. We have to learn the lesson from him that we should be instruments in the hands of the Lord just as he was an instrument in the hands of Sri Rama. Even though there may be plenty of wealth and property we should consider that as God's and not our own. His life further teaches that one can attain God-realisation while remaining in the world. Bharata lived amidst luxuries and temptations of the world and yet he was not a bit affected by them. He conducted the affairs of the state in the most able manner and yet his mind was always fixed on Rama and his tongue was always uttering Rama, Rama.

O noble Bharata ! O mighty scion of Ikshwaku race or the solar dynasty. O pride of Sri Rama ! Grant us the inner strength to tread the path of righteousness ! Show us the way to develop sincere devotion unto Rama.

5. SATRUGNA

Satrugna, son of Dasaratha by Sumitra was born at the same time with Lakshmana. He was an intimate companion of Bharata, just as Lakshmana was the close companion of Sri Rama. He also was well versed in the holy scriptures. He knew archery well.

Satrugna was married to Srutakirti, daughter of Kushadhwaja, brother of King Janaka. The love between Bharata and Satrugna is indescribable. They dined together, slept together and put on the same dress. Satrugna followed Bharata like a shadow. He took great delight in serving Bharata and carrying out his commands with obedience and willingness.

He severely beat Manthara, the wicked maid-servant of Kaikeyi, threw her down on the ground

and trampled her under his feet, because he knew that it was she who had instigated Kaikeyi to do that wicked plot against Rama. The kind-hearted Bharata intervened. Satrugna was forced to set Manthara free.

When Bharata lived in Nandigrama he ordered Satrugna to remain in the palace and serve the three mothers. Satrugna faithfully carried out the orders of his brother.

He was courageous, just, noble and faithful. He lived to serve Bharata. He became one with Bharata.

6. DASARATHA

Swayambhu Manu was born as Dasaratha and Satarugna as Kausalya. They did severe penance in order to get the Lord Hari as their son. The Lord gave them a promise and acted according to His promise. He was born as the son of Kausalya and Dasaratha.

King Dasaratha belonged to the solar dynasty. The blood of Ikshwaku ran in his veins. He was well-versed in the Vedas. He was very intelligent, truthful, kind, pious brave and powerful. Dasaratha was a very powerful Emperor. He was the greatest ruler of his time. Even the Gods sought his help when they fought against the Asuras.

He had eight just and able ministers *viz.*, Dhreshhti, Yayanta, Vijaya, Sureshtra,—Reshtra, Vardhana, Akopa, Dharmapala and Sumantra. Saints like Vasishtha, Vamadeva, Suyajna, Jawali, Kasyapa, Gautama, Markandeya and Kattyayana gave their wise counsel to the king.

He ruled his kingdom justly. The innocent were protected properly. The wicked, the licentious and the idle persons were banished from his kingdom. During his regime there were no dacoits. Life and property were perfectly safe.

He had three wives Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi.

Once king Dasaratha started to the forest on a hunting expedition. While he was on the look-out for a prey, heard a sound which resembled that of an elephant drinking water. He aimed a sharp arrow in the direction of the sound and the arrow hit a youth who was filling his pitcher with water. At once the youth began to cry aloud falling down senseless. Hearing the cry Dasaratha proceeded to the spot and found a Brahmin boy hit by his arrow. King Dasaratha felt pity for the young man and enquired of him who he was. The young Brahmin told the King that he was the only son of his parents who were both blind. He requested the king to take the pot of water to his cottage where his parents were eagerly expecting water for drinking. The Brahmin youth died on the spot. King Dasaratha with a heavy heart soon reached the cottage and saw the blind couple calling out their son by his name. King Dasaratha replied them and disclosed his identity. Then he narrated the sorrowful fate of their son and begged pardon from them for his thoughtless and cruel action.

The blind parents of the Brahmin boy were sunk in an ocean of sorrow and cursed King Dasaratha saying, "You will die of separation from your dearest son just as we do in your presence."

The curse pronounced by the old Brahmin couple had its effect when Sri Rama left for Chitrakute with Lakshmana and Sita Devi and King Dasaratha left his physical body calling "Rama, Rama, Lakshmana and Sita."

7 SRI HANUMAN.

Sri Hanuman was born of Anjana from Pavana, the wind God. He was named Hanuman after the name of the city Hanumpur over which his maternal uncle Parti Surya ruled. Hanuman's body was hard as a stone. So Anjana named him Bajrang. He is also known by the names "Mahabir" or mightiest hero, (because he exhibited several heroic feats,) Balibima and Maruti.

The world has not yet seen and will not see in future also a mighty hero like Sri Hanuman. During his life time he worked wonders and exhibited super-human feats of strength and valour. He has left behind him a name which, as long as the world lasts, will continue wielding a mighty influence over the minds of millions of people.

He is one of the seven Chiranjivis. He is the only learned scholar who knows the nine Vyakaranas. He learnt the Sastras from the Sun-God. He is the personification of Brahmacharya. He is the wisest of the wise, strongest of the strong and bravest of the brave. He is the Sakti of Rudra. He who meditates on him and repeats his name attains power, strength, glory, prosperity and success in life. He is worshipped in all parts of India, particularly in Maharashtra.

He was born at the most auspicious hour of the morning of the 8th of the Lunar month, Chait, at 4 o'clock on the most blessed day, Tuesday.

He had the power to assume any form he liked, to swell his body to an enormous extent and to reduce it to the length of a thumb-nail. His strength was superhuman. He was the terror of Rakshasas. He was well versed in the four Vedas and other sacred books. His valour, wisdom, knowledge of the scriptures and superhuman strength attracted everybody who came near him. He had extraordinary skill in warfare.

He is the chosen messenger, warrior and servant of Sri Rama. He is the votary and devotee of Lord Rama. Rama was his all in all. He lived to serve Rama. He lived in Rama. He lived for Rama. He was a minister and intimate friend of Sugriva.

From his very birth he exhibited extraordinary physical strength and worked many miracles.

When he was a child he put the sun into his mouth. All the Gods were very much troubled. They came with folded hands to the child and humbly entreated him to release the sun. The child set free the sun at their request.

Hanuman saw Sri Rama for the first time in Kishkindha. Sri Rama and Lakshmana came there in the course of their search of Sita whom Ravana had carried away.

A Rishi pronounced a curse on Hanuman for his wrong action that he would remain unconscious of his great strength and prowess till he meets Sri Rama and serves Him with devotion. As soon as Hanuman beheld Sri Rama he became quite conscious of his strength and power.

In Lanka Hanuman exhibited his immense strength and extraordinary powers. He destroyed

the beautiful grove which was a pleasure resort of Ravana. He uprooted many trees and killed many Rakshasas. Ravana was very much infuriated at this. He sent Jambumali to fight against Sri Hanuman who took the trunk of a tree and hurled it against Jambumali and killed him. Ravana sent his son Aksha to fight against Hanuman. He was also killed. Then he sent Indrajit. Hanuman threw a great tree upon Indrajit. Indrajit fell down senseless on the ground. After some time Indrajit recovered his consciousness. He threw the noose of Brahma on Hanuman. He allowed himself to be bound down by the noose. He wanted to honour Brahma. Indrajit ordered the Rakshasas to carry the monkey to his father's court. Even hundred Rakshasas were not able to lift Hanuman.

Hanuman made himself as light as possible. The Rakshasas lifted him up. When they placed him over their shoulders he suddenly become very heavy and crushed the Rakshasas to death. Then Hanuman asked them to remove the rope. They removed the rope, Hanuman proceeded to the council Hall of Ravana.

Ravana said, "O mischievous monkey! what will you say in your defence? I will now put you to death." Hanuman laughed and said, "O wicked Ravana! Give back Sita to Lord Rama and ask his pardon. Otherwise you will be ruined and the whole Lanka will be destroyed." These words of Hanuman made Ravana very furious. He ordered the Rakshasas to cut off the head of Hanuman.

Vibhishana intervened and said, "O brother, it is unlawful and unrighteous to kill a messenger. You can inflict some punishment only."

Ravana consented. He wanted to deprive Hanuman of his tail and to make him ugly. He ordered the Rakshasas to wrap Hanuman's tail with clothes soaked in oil and ghee. Hanuman extended his tail to such a length and size that all the clothes in Lanka would not cover it. Then Hanuman reduced his tail of his own accord. The Rakshasas wrapped the tail with clothes soaked in oil and ghee and lighted the pieces of cloth, Hanuman expanded his body to an enormous size and began to jump from place to place. The whole Lanka caught fire. All the palatial buildings were burnt down to ashes.

Hanuman then jumped into the sea in order to cool and refresh himself. A drop of his perspiration fell into the mouth of a great fish which gave birth to a mighty hero named Makar Dhruj. Makar Dhruj is considered as the son of Hanuman. Thereupon Hanuman went to the Asoka grove and told Sita all that he had done.

Then he crossed the sea through the air and came back to the place where his army was placed. He told them all that had happened. Thereupon they all marched quickly to carry the good news to Sri Rama and Sugriva. They reached the city of Kiskindha. Hanuman gave Sita's ring to Lord Rama. Sri Rama rejoiced heartily. He praised Hanuman and embraced him and said, "O mighty Hanuman! I cannot repay your debt."

When all the brothers and sons of Ravana were killed, Ravana sent for his brother named Avi Ravana who was the king of the nether world. Avi Ravana came to Lanka. Ravana asked his help to fight against Sri Rama and Lakshmana.

Avi Ravana consented to help his brother. At dead of night he assumed the form of Vibhishan, brother of Ravana, an ally and devotee of Sri Rama and reached the place where Rama and Lakshmana were sleeping. Hanuman was keeping the watch. He thought that Vibhishana was coming. Therefore he allowed him to enter the camp. Avi Ravana slowly took the two brothers on his shoulders and repaired to his kingdom.

When the day dawned Hanuman found out that Sri Rama and Lakshmana were missing. He found out that Avi Ravana had carried them to his kingdom. At once he proceeded to the nether world and received information that Avi Ravana had made arrangements to kill the brothers in a sacrifice. Hanuman assumed a tiny form, entered the temple and sat over the image of the Goddess. The image went down into the earth. Hanuman took up Her seat. When Avi Ravana was about to sacrifice the two brothers, Hanuman appeared in his own form and killed him. He installed Makar Dhruja his own son on the throne, took the brothers on his shoulders and brought them to Lanka.

Hanuman killed many heroes in the great war. Dhumar, Vajro, Roshat, Ankhan and several other great warriors were killed only by him.

When the great war was over, Vibhishana was installed on the throne of Lanka. The time of banishment was about to be over. Sri Rama, Lakshmana, Sita and Hanuman sat on the Pushapaka Viman or aeroplane and reached Ayodhya in time.

The coronation ceremony of Lord Rama was celebrated with great eclat and pomp. Sita gave

Hanuman a necklace of pearls of rarest quality. Hanuman received it with great respect and began to break the pearls with his teeth. Sita and other ministers who were sitting in the council hall were quite astonished at this queer act of Sri Hanuman.

Sita asked Hanuman "O mighty Hero". What are you doing? Why do you break the pearls?" Sri Hanuman said, "O venerable Mother! It is the most valuable necklace indeed as it has come to me through Thy holy hand. But I want to find out whether any of the pearls contains my beloved Lord Rama. I do not keep a thing devoid of Him. I do not find Him in any of the pearls." Sita asked "Tell me whether you keep Lord Rama within you." Hanuman immediately opened his heart and showed it to Sri Rama, Sita and others. They all found Lord Rama accompanied by Sita in the heart of Sri Hanuman.

Lord Rama rejoiced heartily. He came down the throne and embraced Hanuman and blessed him. Sri Hanuman passed the rest of his life in the company of the Lord.

When Sri Rama ascended His supreme abode Hanuman also wished to follow Him. But the Lord asked Him to remain in this world as His representative and attend all assemblies of men where discourses on His deeds were held and heard and help His devotees in cultivating devotion.

He is a Chiranjeevi. He is everywhere. He who has eyes and devotion beholds him and receives his blessing.

Hanuman ranks first amongst the heroes of the world. His heroic deeds, wonderful exploits and

his marvellous feats of strength and bravery cannot be adequately described. His sense of duty was extremely laudable. He had great skill in all military tactics and methods of warfare. His crossing the sea of thirty miles in one leap, and lifting the crest of the range of a mountain in the palm of his hand, his carrying the brothers on his shoulders from the nether world to Lanka are all astounding superhuman feats which baffle human description.

He conquered innumerable difficulties which cropped in his way through his courage, patience and undaunted spirit. He made untiring search to find out Sita. At the time of danger he exhibited marvellous courage and presence of mind. He was steady and firm in his actions. He was always successful in his attempts. Failure and despair were unknown to him. He gave up his life at the service of the Lord. He had not a tinge of selfishness in his actions. All his actions were all offerings unto Lord Rama. No one has reached the climax in *Dasya Bhav* in *Bhakti* like Sri Hanuman. He is a rare jewel among devotees, the supreme head among Pundits, the king among celibates and the great commander among heroes and warriors.

O mighty Hanuman, untiring devoted Sevak of Sri Rama, joy of Anjana, king of Brahmacharins ! show us the secrets of Brahmacharya and the ways to attain purity in thought, word and deed. May India have such heroes and Brahmacharins ever more !

Where Hanuman is, there are Sri Rama and Sri Sita and wherever Sri Rama and Sri Sita are praised and their deeds are recited there Hanuman is.

Glory to Hanuman, the blessed devotee of Lord Rama. Glory, glory to Sri Anjaneya, the mighty hero, undaunted warrior and learned Brahmachari the like of whom the world has not yet seen and will not see in all times to come.

May His blessings be upon you all. Let us sing His glory now :—

1. Jeya Shiya Ram Jeya, Jeya Shiya Ram
Jeya Shiya Ram Jeya, Jeya Shiya Ram
Jeya Hanuman Jeya Hanuman.
2. Jeya Jaya Sita Ramki, Jeya bolo Hanumanaki
Rama Lakshmana Janki, Jeya bolo Hanu-
manaki
3. Anjaneya Veera

Hanumantha Soora.

Om Tat Sat !

8. JATAYU AND SAMPATI.

Jatayu and Sampati were descendants of Garuda, the king of all birds. Jatayu was a vulture and the younger brother of Sampati. They were born in the region of the Himalayas. They loved each other dearly.

Jatayu was a friend of King Dasaratha. On one occasion he saved the life of Dasaratha, the king of Ayodhya, when he was thrown down along with his car by Saturn during a fight.

Jatayu and Sampati often raced in the air. One day They wanted to reach the sun. They soared in the air higher and higher. At last

it became difficult for then to bear the rays of the sun. Jatayu nearly fainted but the merciful Sampati spread his large wings between his brother and the sun. Jatayu was saved but Sampati's wings were singed and fell down senseless on the Vindhya mountains. After some time he recovered his consciousness and slowly dragged himself to the cave of a saint.

He said to the saint, "O Holy Sage ! I have lost my wings. Let me die." The sage said, "You will not gain anything by death. Wait patiently for some time. The time will come for you to serve a great person. You will regain your power to fly through his service."

Sampati acted in accordance with the instructions of the sage. He waited patiently. His son Suparsva brought him food daily.

An army of monkeys came near Sampati. They were sent by Sugriva to search Sita. Sugriva would kill them if they did not find her. The monkeys made vigilant search everywhere but their efforts were in vain. They were in a desperate condition. They resolved to sit there, starve and die. Angada, their leader, related to them the story of the death of Jatayu.

Sampati dragged himself closer to the monkeys to hear the tale of his brother. They repeated to him how Jatayu died. Then Sampati told them his own story and asked them to carry him down to the sea. They did so. Sampati performed the death rites for his brother. He was carried back again to his abode. The monkeys requested Sampati to help them in their mission to find Sita.

Sampati replied, "I can tell you where she is. My son Suparsva returned the other day without any food for me. I asked him the reason for his not bringing food for me. He said, 'My father: I could not find any living creature today. They were all hiding themselves. I beheld a huge monster with ten heads. He was coming near me. He had a very handsome woman in his arms. She cried for help to Rama. I wanted to help her, but the demon behaved towards me very courteously and requested me to leave him alone. As he was courteous, as he treated me with respect, so I also treated him with courtesy and respect. I allowed him to go. Afterwards I found out that the demon was Ravana, the king of Lanka. All living creatures hid themselves on account of fear for Ravana.'

Sampati said, "I am endowed with a powerful vision. I can see objects even at a distance of one hundred Yojanas. Now I can tell you where Sita is. There is the land of Lanka in the southern sea. Ravana has carried away Sita there. Make a vigorous search there. You will surely find her."

Now Sampati developed new wings and had a desire to fly. The words of the saint turned to be true. Sampati served the cause of Sri Rama and was blessed with fresh wings through His grace. He flew in the air again with great joy.

Jatayu was devoted to God. When Ravana was carrying away Sita, Jatayu heard her cries and fought against Ravana in order to rescue Sita. Ravana cut the two wings of Jatayu. Jatayu fell on earth mortally wounded.

He remained in that condition till Sri Rama came to him in the course of his search of Sita. The

noble bird told the whole sad story to Rama and then died. It was Jatayu who first informed Rama that Sita had been carried away by Ravana.

Sri Rama put Jatayu in his lap, washed the blood from the wound with the tresses of his hair. He breathed his last breath in the lap of Sri Rama. Sri Rama himself performed his funeral rites. What a fortunate being Jatayu was. No other devotee save Jatayu had enjoyed till now the rare fortune of dying in the lap of Sri Rama.

Sri Rama showed to Jatayu the same reverence he had for his father. He gave him the same status in the other world as was given to Dasaratha. Noble Jatayu sacrificed his life in the cause of Sri Rama. Sri Rama owned Jatayu as his uncle, a great friend of his father and one of His greatest devotees.

It is not necessary that one should be born as a Brahmin to attain the final emancipation. God gives salvation even to the birds. What is wanted is sincere and one-pointed devotion to the Lord.

Glory to the high-souled Jatayu, the greatest hero among the birds, who looked to Sri Rama's interest in all possible ways, who gave up his life for Rama's cause and who won the highest distinction among devotees and whose life even now inspires men to tread the path of devotion and struggle for attaining God-realisation.

9. VALI.

Vali was a very powerful monkey. He was the Amsa of Indra. He could travel from the eastern ocean to the western one and from the southern to the northern one. He could ascend the mountain and uproot big trees. He destroyed the powerful

Asura Dundubhi who was in the form of a buffalo. Vali had a boon. He could get half the strength of any one who stood to fight before him.

Sugriva doubted about the valour and strength of Sri Rama. Then Rama said, "O Sugriva! I shall give you convincing proofs of my valour and strength." Sri Rama pushed the skeleton of Dundubhi with the toe to ten Yojanas. Sugriva said, "O Lord Rama! Now pierce a palm tree with your arrow. Then I shall be able to judge the might of the two. Vali pierced these seven palms many times."

Thereupon Sri Rama to create confidence in Sugriva took up his bow and sent an arrow against the palms. It pierced through the seven palms, a rock and the inner most region of the earth and again came back to the quiver in a minute. Only in the cases of Lord Rama and Lord Krishna the arrows came back to the quiver. Sugriva was struck with great wonder. He had perfect confidence in the prowess of Sri Rama.

Sri Rama helped Sugriva in his fight with Vali. He sent a shaft which pierced the breast of Vali. The heroic Vali fell prostrate on the ground.

Vali spoke to Sri Rama. "Rama! I was fighting with another man. Why did you strike me down? You are born in a noble family. You are heroic, mighty, compassionate, virtuous. You always take care in the welfare of people. But now I find you are wicked and unrighteous. You are a hypocrite. I have not done you any wrong in any way, or to your city or province. You are a famous king. You outwardly look to be virtuous. You are born of a Kshatriya family. How

could you commit this dastardly act? You ought to have destroyed me in a fair and open fight. Tell me why are you wandering about in the guise of a mendicant? You are whimsical, haughty, fickle and too narrow-minded in the discharge of royal duties. Tell me how could you justify your action? You have committed a great sin by destroying me. You are wicked, treacherous and mean. You have no character. You have deviated from the path of righteousness. It was difficult to attack me, but you have struck me by concealing yourself from my view just as a serpent bites a man when asleep."

Sri Rama replied, "Vali! you are childish. You are quite ignorant of duty. You have not learnt anything from the elders or preceptors. You have blamed me through your childishness and ignorance."

"You are irreligious and passionate. You have no character. You have violated the duties of a king. Elder brother and preceptor should be regarded as one's own father. Younger brother and disciple should be treated as one's own son. Now hear what for I have killed you. You have violated the eternal principles of righteousness and have outraged your younger brother's wife. His wife Ruma is in the position of your daughter-in-law. You have committed unpardonable sin by securing her. You have violated religion. Therefore I have punished you. Death is the only proper punishment for a man who goes against immemorable customs. I am born of a noble Kshatriya -line and I cannot overlook your crimes.

"I have also promised to help Sugriva. He is my friend. How can I break my promise? It is my duty to punish you. The king who does not punish

the offender commits a great sin. I have chastised you in accordance with the code of morality. A king is governed by religion.

“I have something more to tell you. I have not deviated from the path of righteousness by striking you from concealment. I promised to help Sugriva from behind, if he failed to defeat you. I am justified in striking you thus. Men kill or capture animals in various ways by means of noose or trap, either openly or by lying in ambush. You are only an animal. Even pious princes hunt in the forest. You are a monkey. It does not matter whether you fought with me or not. The king is the defender of his people. His duty is to do them justice. I have only done my duties. You have no idea of right and wrong. Therefore you are unjustly accusing me out of anger.”

Vali attained spiritual insight and thought that Rama was absolutely innocent. He then said to Rama with folded hands. “You are virtuous. I am a sinner. Please forgive me. Kindly protect me. Angada is my son. He is very dear to me. He is a mere boy. Please protect him also.”

Sri Rama consoled Vali, “O Vali ! Now you are freed from guilt. Abandon all your sorrows and fear. I shall take great care of Angada. I shall treat him with great affection.”

Then Vali gave up his mortal coil and passed into silence.

Lord Rama was Lord Vishnu himself though he appeared like a man. Divine dispensation is always beyond the reach of social and moral laws of insignificant, puny men of little understanding. It is mere

foolishness to question about the actions of the Omniscient and Omnipotent Avatara whether they are justifiable or not. It is height of one's own folly only. Wise people will never do so

10. LAVA AND KUSA.

Lava and Kusa were the sons of Sri Rama. They were the twin brothers in the Ashram of Rishi Valmiki.

Sri Rama could not bear the criticism of the washerman in accepting Sita who lived in Lanka, the kingdom of Ravana. So he commanded Lakshmana to leave off Sita in the forest. Sita was then pregnant. She could not bear the separation of the Lord. She was weeping aloud on the banks of the Ganges when Sage Valmiki happened to pass that way. Valmiki enquired her about her cause of grief. The sage was moved to pity and he entrusted Sita to the women of his Ashram.

As days passed on Sita gave birth to Lava. He was very handsome and captivated the hearts of all who looked at him. One day Sita left Lava to the charge of Valmiki and went to the river Ganges for a bath. When she went half the distance she changed her mind and returned to the Ashram and took the child also with her for bath. Then the sage Valmiki was sitting in meditation. When he opened his eyes he could not find the child left to his charge. He was much puzzled. He did not know what he could say to Sita when she came after her bath. So immediately he took a Kusa grass and pronounced some sacred Mantras and created out of it a child equal in all respects to Lava. Sita returned with Lava and was surprised to find a similar child in the

Ashram. Valmiki explained to Sita what took place in her absence. The new child was named Kusa and Sita took care of Kusa as her own child and Lava and Kusa grew like twins.

Lava and Kusa were brought up in the midst of congenial surroundings under the direct guardianship of Rishi Valmiki. They had all the virtues of Kshatriya princes in the highest degree. They sang to music Ramayana of Valmiki for the first time in the Durbar of Sri Rama and the streets of Ayodhya. They were specially trained by Rishi Valmiki.

Lava was a boy warrior. He was modest, bold, humble and noble. He resembled in every respect his father in his features and outward forms. He had the same voice, the same dignity, the same awe-inspiring majesty, as those of his father. His martial spirit was most wonderful. He even opposed his father with undaunted intrepidity and matchless valour. He could not brook the over-bearing attitude of his opponent or rival however great he might be. The martial fire was burning in Kusa also. He was the worthy brother of Lava. He also possessed all the noble virtues. He had extraordinary manliness.

Sri Rama made arrangements to perform an Aswamedha Yagna. The sacrificial horse was let off to wander throughout the country to receive the reverence of all the subjects and the kings who ruled smaller countries. As the horse passed through the hermitage of Lava and Kusa they tied it to a tree in front of the Ashram.

Lakshmana was following the horse. He found the horse tied to a tree in front of Valmiki's Ashram where Lava and Kusa lived. Then Lakshmana

enquired as to who stopped the horse and he was told that Lava and Kusa tied the horse to the tree.

Lakshmana said, "O boy saints! what do you gain by stopping the sacrificial horse. Untie it soon. Ask for anything that you like in return." Lava and Kusa replied, "We would not leave the horse. Fight with us, defeat us and then take the horse."

Lakshmana could not defeat Lava and Kusa. He then went to fetch Hanuman, Sri Rama, Bharata and Satrugna. There took place a formidable fight in which Lava and Kusa bound with cords all except Sri Rama. Sri Rama took a very powerful arrow and fixed the aim at Lava and Kusa when Sage Valmiki stopped Sri Rama saying, "O Rama! these boys are your own sons. Do not kill them. Take them to Ayodhya." Sri Rama was much pleased. Lava and Kusa prostrated before Sri Rama and got his blessings. Later on Sage Valmiki took Lava and Kusa to Ayodhya for the Aswamedha sacrifice.

11. RAVANA.

Ravana was the brother of Kubera, a Lokapala or guardian in charge of the North, the Lord of all treasures and a close friend of Lord Siva. He was not really a Rakshasa or Daitya or Asura or Danava. He descended from Brahma. He was the son of Visravas who was the son of Pulastya. Pulastya was the son of Brahma.

Ravana had two brothers Kumbhakarna and Vibhishana. All the three brothers did severe Tapas and saw Brahma face to face. Brahma enquired the brothers what boon they desired of him.

Vibhishana who was endowed with Sattvic qualities desired devotion to Vishnu, Kumbhakarna

wanted the destruction of all the Devas. The Deva found out the desire of Kumbhakarna and ran to Saraswati, wife of Brahma for help. Saraswati was present in the tongue of the demon Kumbhakarna when he (Kambo Karna) asked for the boon. By a slight error in pronunciation Kumbhakarna asked that he may be blessed with sleep instead of the extinction of the Devas which he had thought of. For "Nirdevatwa" he uttered "Nidratwa" and thus missed his goal.

Ravana desired that he should not meet with death at the hands of any demon or god or any beast. In his pride he forgot to mention the name of man because he was sure that no man could kill him.

Ravana married Mandodari, the daughter of Maya. He begot a son through Mandodari who was called Meghanada. When the child was born there was a roar of thunder and so he was named Meghanada.

Meghanada was very brave and courageous. He had wonderful powers. He defeated even Indra, the Lord of gods and got the name Indrajit.

Ravana illtreated the people very much. He enslaved the gods and many beautiful ladies. At last when his cruelties became unbearable the gods approached Vishnu for help and He incarnated as Sri Rama to destroy Ravana.

Ravana was a great devotee of Lord Siva. He did severe penance. Even Rishis and Devas could not compete with him in the practice of rigorous austerities. He always challenged the Devas and Rishis and subdued them by manifesting his power and strength of Tapaschara. He obtained from Lord Siva twice His five heads as the reward for his Tapas.

He always worshipped Lord Siva in the form of Linga.

He challenged Nandi and turned his face to that of a monkey by his curse. Nandi took vengeance and became Hanuman, the leader of a host of monkeys and brought about the destruction of Lanka and Ravana's companions as the servant of Sri Rama.

Ravana said to Hanuman when he was tied up by Indrajit and brought before him. "Are you not that Nandi whom I cursed in Kailasa to have the face of a monkey?".

SECTION V.

SRI RAMA'S TEACHINGS.

1. SRI RAMA'S INSTRUCTIONS TO LAKSHMANA

(On Worship.)

Sri Lakshmana said, "I wish to hear, O Raghu-vir, the method of Thy worship, which has been declared by devotees like Narada, Vyasa to be the easy means of emancipation."

Sri Rama said, "Let the twice-born man who has put on the sacred thread and received the Mantra from his preceptor worship Me with faith according to his instructions, either in his own heart or through images and the like or in the fire or the Saligram stone. Let him first take a bath in the morning. He should perform the Sandhya and other duties in accordance with the rites. He should make a Sankalpa for the successful termination of all actions. He should then worship his preceptor as if he were my own Self.

"He should then bathe in water the images made of stone. He should clean the images if they are made of clay or cloth. He should offer flowers, perfumes. He should worship Me with a concentrated mind according to the method taught by his preceptor. Decoration of images by flowers is very dear to Me. If water is offered with devotion, it is very dear to Me.

"Let him sit on a seat of Kusa grass, skin, and cloth and face the image. Let him place a vessel full of water to his left and flowers and the like to the right for the purpose of Arghya, Padya and Madhu Parka. Arghya is the offering of water, rice,

grass etc., The Padya is the offering of water for washing the feet. Madhu Parka is the offering of honey and curds to the Gods.

“He should place four vessels for the purpose of sipping water. Let him then meditate on Me in the lotus of the heart as Light of lights. Let him invoke that light or energy in the image. Let him worship Me without guile with Padya, Arghya, water for Achamana (sipping), Ablution, clothes, ornaments according to his means.

“Let him worship Me daily with camphor, Kum-kum, sandal wood, Agaru, flowers, burning of incense, lamps, waving of lights, etc. Let him offer these with faith daily. I accept whatever is offered with faith and devotion.

“Let him perform carefully the Homa according to rule and offer libation to the fire with the help of Mulamantra or the Purusha Sukta and make oblations of rice, barley and ghee. Let him meditate upon Me as of the lustre of gold, adorned with gems and dwelling in the midst of fire at the time of the Homa.

“Let him offer betel leaf and other things. Let him control his speech and recite the sacred Mantras. Let him meditate on Me.

“Let him dance, sing My praise, read my prayers, recite My Lilas in my honour. Let him place upon his head my Prasada full of faith and with hands put My feet on his head with devotion. Let him bow unto me saying ‘ O Lord, do Thou protect me from this terrible Samsara’. Let him meditate on Me in his heart as the light within.

“ If one duly worships Me by the above methods, he attains success here and hereafter through My grace. He becomes like Myself through constant worship. My worship is a great purifier.”

2. RAMA HRIDAYAM.

The Lord Mahadeva said, “Then Rama Himself said to Hanum n ‘Listen now to the truth about the individual self (Jivatman), not-self (Anatma) and the Supreme Self (Paramatma).’ ”

“ Just as there seems to be three kinds of space viz., Absolute Space (Mahakasa), space as limited by a jar (Gatakasa) and space as reflected in the water that is in the jar (Jala-pratibimba Akasa), so also there is the intelligence or Chaitanya limited by Antahkarana, reflected Chaitanya and Absolute Chaitanya. In this way intelligence is also three-fold.

“ The idea of the doer (agency) which is the function of the intellect as reflected in the Buddhi or intellect together with the idea of Jiva (the individual Self) is superimposed on the limitless, the pure, the witness (Sakshi), Absolute Chaitanya, by the foolish or the ignorant.

“ The reflection of the intelligence or Chaitanya is a wrong notion, as it is the result of Avidya or ignorance. Brahman or the Supreme Self is free from limitations. Limitation is only a superimposition (Adhyasa) on Him.

“ The identity of the illimitable Brahman with the reflected self (Jiva or the individual soul) which underlies the idea of egoism is established through the great sentence or Mahavakya like “Tat Twam Asi” “Thou art That.”

“When the knowledge of oneness or unity arises from meditation on the great sentence “Tat Twam Asi” then Avidya with all her offshoots is annihilated. There is no doubt in this.

“Knowing this my devotee attains to my own Self. Let those who are destitute of devotion to me, roll in the abyss of the scriptures. There is neither knowledge nor emancipation for them even through hundreds of incarnations.

“O Hanuman ! O Thou faultless one ! This profound mystery of the heart (essence) of my own Self has been in truth declared to Thee. Let this not be revealed to one who has no faith in Me, and who is of evil disposition, albeit he gives for it a dominion greater than that of Indra himself.”

The Lord Mahadeva said, “Thus O Parvati, I have declared unto Thee the mystery or heart of Rama (Ramahridaya). It is a deep secret. It is dear to the heart. It is a great purifier and destroyer of sin. This was declared by Rama himself. It is the essence or compendium of all the Vedanta. Whoever always reads it with faith attains salvation. There is no doubt in this. Sins like that of killing a Brahmin, even though committed in many lives are destroyed by this. There is no doubt in this because this is the saying of Rama himself.”

“He who is greatly fallen, who is a man of extremely sinful acts, who is always hankering after other people’s wealth and wives, who is a thief, who is guilty of the sin of killing a Brahmin, father and mother, who has done evil to Yogins, even if such a man reads this Ramahridaya with faith attains a state which is adored by all the Gods and which even Yogis cannot attain.”

3. RAMA GITA

I.

Lakshmana, the son of Sumitra, whose mind had been purified by devotion, approached Lord Rama with reverence and faith, made his prostrations and said :—

“O Lord ! Thou art pure knowledge. Thou art the soul of all beings. Thou art the Lord. Thou art harmless. Thou art known to those who have attained knowledge of the Self and whose minds are always attached to Thy lotus feet like a bee to the lotus flower.

“I take refuge in Thy lotus feet which secure the final emancipation from the round of births and deaths and which are adored by Yogis, sages and saints. Kindly teach me, O venerable Lord that knowledge by which I may quickly and easily cross this impassable ocean of ignorance.”

Thereupon Rama imparted to Lakshmana that knowledge which is declared by the Vedas for the eradication of ignorance. The aspirant should first perform in a disinterested manner without caring for fruits all those duties which are enjoined for one's own caste and order and purify his mind. He should acquire the necessary qualifications or the four means of salvation *viz.*, Vivek (discrimination between the real and the unreal), Vairagya (dispassion), Shad Sampat or the sixfold virtues *viz.*, Sama (control of the mind), Dama (control of senses), Uparati (cessation from worldly work), Titiksha (power of endurance), Sraddha (faith), Samadhana (one-pointedness of mind) and Mumukshatwa (burning desire for liberation).

II.

All works lead to rebirths. Man does good and bad actions (Dharma and Adharma) and reaps the fruits of his actions *viz*, pleasure and pain. Karma produces body and from the body arises work. In this way the course of worldly life (Samsara) revolves like a wheel without an end.

The root cause of it is ignorance (Avidya or Agyana). Removal of ignorance is the only means for destroying this course of worldly life. Knowledge alone is capable of annihilating this ignorance. Action (Karma) cannot destroy it, because it is born of ignorance and is not its contrary or opposite.

The performance of action does not destroy ignorance and attachment. It leads to further action and perishable and transitory fruits. Sometimes one goes up and takes a high birth, sometimes one goes down and takes a low birth, now happy, now miserable. Therefore let the sage abandon action and devote himself to knowledge and meditation on the truths of the Vedanta.

An objector says, "Action is also enjoined by the Vedas as conducive to the highest end of man, *i. e.*, knowledge. Action (Karma) is prescribed for one who has a body. It eventually becomes the helpmate of Vidya (knowledge). The Veda proclaims that giving up of act on is sinful. Let the seeker after salvation, therefore, always engage himself in doing works."

But the sage replies, "Vidya (knowledge) is quite independent. It is certain in its results. It does not require any helpmate or aid even in thought."

The Karma Kandin or the advocate of works says, "It is true that knowledge is independent and

certain in its results; Vedic sacrifice also requires other aids like time, place for its accomplishment. Similarly Vidya illumined by works duly performed, leads to the attainment of salvation in a special manner."

Some logicians hold the view that the combination of knowledge and work (Karma Gyana Samuchya) is conducive to salvation. This is certainly not true, because it involves obvious contradiction. Work is done through the idea of 'I' in the body, whereas knowledge arises from the elimination of the idea of 'I' in the body and the like.

Let the wise man, therefore, abandon all works. There can be no combination of knowledge and work because knowledge is opposed to work.

Let him withdraw the senses from all objects and devote himself always in the attainment of self-realisation.

As long as there is the notion of "I" in the body and the like due to the influence of Maya, so long one is bound by the injunction of the Vedas for works. Let the wise man *sublate* or eliminate the whole of it through the doctrine of "Neti Neti" (not this, not this) and abandon all works, knowing the Highest Brahman or the Eternal.

When one attains Brahma Gyana, when the knowledge which destroys the idea of the separation of the supreme soul from the individual soul dawns in the purified internal organ, then Maya along with its offshoots or effects which cause birth and rebirth and action vanishes immediately.

When ignorance is destroyed by knowledge it cannot produce actions which lead to further births.

When ignorance has been annihilated by knowledge which is pure and non-dual, how shall it again arise ?

When ignorance is once annihilated it cannot arise again. How can then there be any idea of "I am the doer (Karta), I am the enjoyer (Bhokta)". Therefore knowledge is quite independent. It requires nothing for its fructification. It is certain in its results. It does not stand in need of any helping agent. It alone is quite sufficient in order to secure the final salvation.

The Sruti of the Kaivalya Upanishad has declared "All actions should be abandoned." The Vajasaneya Upanishad also proclaims "This alone is Moksha." Therefore knowledge alone and not action is the means of salvation.

The fruits of the two are distinct. Sacrifice is done through various instruments like actor, instruments and the like. On the contrary knowledge is not accomplished by these but by other means.

It is only the intellect of one who superimposes the Self (Atma) upon the not-self (Anatma) that entertains the idea of sin in the non-performance of action. The intellect of the sage has no such idea. Therefore the wise should renounce action which is enjoined as obligatory. It is meant only for those whose minds are attached to the fruit of action.

III

Let one who has got faith through a pure mind and the grace of his Guru (Teacher) know the oneness of the Supreme Soul with the individual soul through the great sentence or Mahavakya "Tat Twam Asi—Thou art That" and be happy and stable like the Meru mountain.

The way for realising the significance of the great sentence "Tat Twam Asi," free from all doubts and uncertainty, is knowledge of the meaning of the three words "Tat," "Twam" and "Asi" which it consists of. "Tat" signifies the supreme Self with His attributes of omniscience and the like. "Twam" signifies the individual soul. 'Asi' (is) connects the two.

Eliminate the Upadhi or limiting adjuncts of the individual soul, such as Avidya and its effect, *viz.*, physical body, mind, intellect, Prana, the senses, the notion of "I" in the body etc., and the Dharmas of the Upadhis, *viz.*, attributes such as small intelligence, small power and *sublate* the Upadhi of Ishwar, *viz.*, Maya and Dharmas of the Upadhi, *viz.*, Omnipotence, Omniscience and attributes of creation, preservation destruction. Retain the pure intelligence in the two cases, the final significance or Lakshya Artha as illustrated in the Jahad-ajahad Lakshana described below and abide in the unity of the Self.

The Vachya Artha of Tat Pada (literal meaning) is Ishwar. The Lakshya Artha of Tat Pada (indicative meaning) is Brahman. The Vachya Artha of Twam Pada is Jiva. The Lakshya Artha of Twam Pada is Kutastha Brahman or Pratyagatman. Identity is shown between Brahman the substratum of Ishwar and Kutastha, the substratum of Jiva.

When the limiting adjuncts, *viz.*, the pot and the walls of the room are broken, the ether in the pot and in the room become identical with the universal ether. When the body-pot is broken by the dawn of knowledge, the individual soul becomes one with Supreme Self.

The identity can only be shown through Jahad-ajahad Lakshana just as in the case "He is the same

person whom I saw." "Soyam Devadatta". This is the method of unification through elimination.

IV

The body composed of the five elements is the Upadhi or the vehicle of Atma. It has a beginning and an end. It is born of Maya. It is the place of the enjoyment of the fruit of action, *viz.*, pleasure and pain.

The subtle body consists of mind, intellect, the five organs of knowledge (Gyana Indriyas), the five organs of action (Karma Indriyas) and the five Pranas or vital airs. This subtle body (*linga sarira*) moves the gross body. It goes from birth to birth.

Maya is the causal body of the Lord. It is beginningless and inscrutable. It is indescribable and incomprehensible (*Anirvachaniya*). Through superimposition Brahman appears as Ishwara and Jiva. Realise your Self through *sublation* of all adjuncts. Practise "Neti, Neti" doctrine and identify yourself with the Supreme Self.

The crystal appears to be red when it is placed near a red flower. Even so this Atman appears to be of the form of the five sheaths because of its proximity to them. When one meditates on the saying of the Upanishads "Asangoyam Purusha—

This Purusha is unattached" then he realises that the Atman is unattached, unborn and without a second.

This Atman is neither an actor nor a thinker. All these are due to the action of the mind and the Prana. Verily He is unattached. "Dhyativa lolayativa—He appears as if meditating, as if moving."

The conditions of the intellect (Buddhi) are threefold *viz.*, waking, dream and deep sleep. They are due to its association with the Gunas of Sattva (goodness), Rajas (activity) and Tamas (inertia). They are not the true conditions of the Supreme Self, because one of them is absent when the other is present. Therefore they are all unreal. They cannot certainly be of the nature of the Supreme Self which is unity and bliss itself.

As long as the intellect has for its root the Gunas of Rajas and Tamas and partakes of the nature of ignorance and functions as 'I' in this body which is a combination of the five elements, the senses, the Pranas and the Atma, so long does the Samsara exist.

"I am the body", "I am the organ", "I am the life breath", "I am a Brahmin", "I am happy", "I am miserable", "I have lost this", "I have gained this", "I am deaf", "I am intelligent", "I am tall", "I am black"—all these and other functions of everyday life are due to the identification of the Atma with the action of the intellect. All these notions are verily in the intellect but not in the pure Atman. They are taken to be in the Atman through beginningless ignorance (Anadyavidya). As long as this continues the course of worldly life runs on.

Eliminate the whole world through the practice of "Neti, Neti" doctrine. Develop pure Sattva. Meditate. Realise. Taste. Taste the nectar of Atma and renounce the world just as one throws the skin and shell of the mango *fruit* after sucking off the juice.

The Atman never dies nor is born. It is not subject to increase or decrease. It is never new or

never old. It is beyond all additions to its greatness. It is of the nature of bliss itself, self-luminous, all-pervading and one without a second. It is illimitable and undecaying.

When such is the nature of Atman which is all intelligence, all bliss, how can the Samsara which is full of sorrow, misery and pain appear to exist in it or for it. It appears to exist on account of ignorance and superimposition (Adhyasa) of the attributes of Atma upon Anatma or non-self. When the knowledge of Atma dawns, this world vanishes immediately. It cannot live in the same place as it is its contrary, just as darkness cannot exist in the presence of light.

Adhyasa or superimposition is said to be that which although different from one thing is yet imposed on it through illusion. Just as the snake is superimposed on the rope, so also the world is superimposed on the Brahman. On account of superimposition the Atman is taken to be of the world, happy, miserable, born, dying etc.

The idea of 'I' (I am, Aham Asmi) is the first super-imposition in the Atma which is free from imperfection, which is secondless, which is free from all modifications of the mind and which transcends Maya.

The functions of the intellect in the form of desire and the like, attachment and pleasure and the like, are the causes of Samsara or the course of worldly life ; because during deep sleep when all the functions of the mind cease, the supreme Self is realised by us to be the nature of bliss itself.

In the Buddhi the reflection of Chit is called the individual soul or Jiva. Verily Brahman or Supreme

Self is the witness. He is not limited by Buddhi or intellect. He is the unconditioned.

The Atma and intellect appear each to partake of the attributes of the other through mutual connection or super-imposition. The intelligent nature of the Atman appears in the intellect and the non-intelligent nature of the intellect in the Atman. This is called Chitjada Granthi or the knot between Atma and intellect. Just as the iron partakes of the nature of fire when it is placed in the fire, so also the intellect partakes of the nature of intelligent Atman because of its proximity to the Atman. Buddhi has no intelligence of its own. It borrows from the Atman which is all-intelligence. The Atman becomes the embodied Self or Jiva and takes himself to be happy or miserable, born or dying. This is mutual super-imposition (Annyonya Adhyasa).

Attain knowledge of Atman. Realise the Atman as free from all adjuncts or limitations. Renounce all that is non-intelligent and the cause of this worldly life.

V

Always meditate on the Atman with an intellect directed to no other object in the following manner, "I am the Light of lights. I am unborn. I am secondless. I am self-luminous. I am deathless. I am very pure. I am an embodiment of knowledge. I am free from all defects. I am all-full. I am bliss itself. I am no doer of action.

"I am ever free. I am unlimited. I am unfathomable. I am all-powerful. I am He who is ever realised in their own selves by the sages who are devoted to the study of the Vedas. I am free from

all modifications. My knowledge transcends the senses."

Then you will attain self-realisation. Knowledge of Brahman will arise. You will get purity of thought. Then you will destroy soon all actions which cause rebirth along with Avidya, the root cause for all actions, just as a sick person destroys disease by taking the elixir of life.

Purify the mind. Sit in a solitary place. Withdraw all the senses from their objects. Bring the mind under control. Introspect. Direct your attention towards knowledge of the Self. Think only of Atman and abide in your own Self.

All this universe verily is Brahman. Merge the world in Brahman, the cause of all causes. He who has done this abides in his own Self which is full and bliss itself. He does not know anything inside or outside. The Brahman alone is in and out.

Meditate that all this universe is nothing but OM. OM is the expression. It is the symbol of Brahman. The universe is the thing expressed. Meditation also is within the pale of ignorance. Meditation ceases when one attains knowledge of Brahman.

The letter "A" in "AUM" expresses the Viswa, "U" expresses the Taijasa and the "M" the Prajna.

Merge the Viswa represented by "A" in the "U" (Taijasa). Merge the Taijasa in the "M". Merge the "M" in the Absolute intelligence. Prajna is the cause for the other two *viz.*, Viswa and Taijasa. Then realise "I am the supreme Self, ever free, ever pure, free from all adjuncts."

Having attained self-realisation, having found his bliss in his own Atma, and having forgotten all, the

sage or Jiwanmukta ever abides in his own effulgent nature, in the bliss of his own Atma, free from all limitation, unfathomable as the ocean without a wave to disturb its surface.

To the Yogi who has practised Samadhi, who has completely withdrawn all his senses from their objects, who has conquered all enemies such as desire, anger, greed, delusion, fear and inertia, who has vanquished the lower self, who has subdued by his Bhakti the Lord of six attributes—to such a Yogi I reveal Myself.”

“Thus contemplating on his own Self day and night, let the sage abide free from all bonds till his Prarabdha Karma which gave him this present body is exhausted. He is absorbed in Me on the dissolution of his body.

“Knowing the cause of worldly life to be the cause of fear and sorrow in the beginning, middle and end and having abandoned all that relates to the Karma Kanda, the action portion of the Shastras, let him engage himself in meditating on Me, the inner soul of all beings.

“When he realises the unity of his own Self with the self of all, he becomes one with my own self, like the water of the ocean when poured into the ocean, becoming the ocean, the milk into milk, milk, the ether into the ether, ether, the air into air, air.

“Even though the sage lives in the world for the exhaustion of his Karma he fully realises that the world is false like the appearance of snake in the rope or silver in the mother-of-pearl of water in the mirage or the appearance of two moons in the sky or the turning of the quarters through the defect of sight.

So long as one does not behold all as My own Self, let him practise devotion, let him be ever devoted to my worship. I do abide for ever in the heart of him who has intense faith and devotion to me.

“My dear Lakshmana! this essence of all the Vedas, this great mystery has been declared by me unto thee. The sage who contemplates upon it is freed from his load of impurities that very moment.

My beloved brother, all this visible world is nothing but Maya. Withdraw thy mind from it. Purify it through meditation on Me alone. Do thou be happy, free from all sorrow and full of bliss.

He who meditates on Me with a pure mind, thinking of Me as above all attributes or thinks of Me as possessed of the attributes of omniscience, becomes my own Self. He purifies all the three worlds by the dust of his feet, just as the sun purifies the world by his light.

This wisdom which is the one essence of all the Vedas, has been thus sung by Me whose glory all the Vedantas proclaim. He who reads it with devotion and faith in his preceptor and practises it attains the final emancipation. He attains to my own form if he has faith in My teachings.

Hari Om Tat Sat !!

Om Santi Santi Santi !!!

SECTION VI

A P P E N D I X

1. RAMANAVAMI MESSAGE

BLESSED IMMORTAL SELF

It gives me great pleasure to send you this short message on the celebration of the Ramanavami day.

Lord Rama was the prince of the Iskhwaku race. He was virtuous and of manly strength. He was the Lord of the mind and the senses. Brave and valiant, he was yet gentle and modest. He was a sage in counsel, kind and sweet in speech and most courteous, and handsome in appearance. He was the master of the divine weapons, and a great Atiratha. Ever devoted to the good and prosperity of his kingdom, he was a defender of the weak and the protector of Dharma. Endowed with wonderful powers of the mind, he was well versed in all sciences, in the science of arms or Dhanurvedya as well as in the science of the Self.

Deep and unfathomed like the ocean, firm and steadfast like the Himalayas, valiant like Vishnu, he was the joy of Kausalya. Though fierce like fire on the battlefield, he was calm like the cool breeze of the Mandara hills, patient like Mother Earth, bounteous like Kubera and righteous like Dharma, the Lord of justice himself. In pains or griefs of his people his heart swiftly sympathises with the sufferer, in the festive scenes which held them in joy, he, like a father shared their joy. By his honour and heroism, as well as by his gentleness and love for his subjects, he greatly endeared himself to the heart of his people. Such a great Lord Rama was and his birthday which you are celebrating today is equally great and auspicious to us all.

Name of Sri Rama is sweeter than the sweetest objects. It is the haven of peace. It is the very

life of pure souls. It is the purifier of all purifying agencies. It quenches the consuming fire of worldly desires. It awakens the knowledge of God which is dormant in our hearts. It bathes the aspirant in the ocean of divine bliss. Glory to Sri Rama and His Name.

Blessed is the pious soul who drinks uninterruptedly the nectar of Sri Rama's Name, which has been churned out of the ocean of the Vedas, which removes the impurities of Kali Yuga or the iron age, which lives constantly on the tongue of Lord Siva, which is a sovereign remedy or unfailing specific to cure the disease of worldly existence and is life itself to mother Janaki.

Tulsidas says, "Name is even superior to the Lord because the Aguna and Saguna aspects are tasted and realised by the power of Name. Rama delivered from the curse a single lady Ahalya, whereas His name has purified crores of wicked men! Rama gave salvation to two of His faithful servants, Jatayu and Sabari, but the Name has been the saviour of countless wicked persons."

He further says: "The two sweet fascinating letters RA and MA are like the two eyes of the Alphabet and the very life breath of the devotees. They are easy to remember and delightful to all. They are beneficial in this world and sustain us in the other world. He advises the Sadhak thus: "Put this jewel—Light of Rama Nama at the gate of your door—the tongue, if you want to illuminate yourself, both inside and outside. All the world knows that by uttering the name even in the opposite way, as Mara Mara instead of Rama Rama, the great saint Valmiki became Brahman himself."

When such is the glory of the repetition of Ulta Name, then what to speak of the glory of utterance of the right and proper Name !

The means by which Sri Rama can be reached is to take His Name and to remain saturated in it. Always remain drunk, imbibing the Lord's sweet name. Let no ideas of purity or impurity enter your mind. There is no unholy object in this world. Should there be any, it becomes the holiest of the holy by contact with the Lord's name. Illusion, notwithstanding all her efforts, fails to get hold of him who remains deeply absorbed in the Lord's Name and Love. Glory to Rama ! Adorations to Rama. Salutations to Rama, Prostrations to Rama !

Lord Rama was Maryada Purushottama. He was a Prema Moorti. He was an ideal son, an ideal brother, an ideal husband, an ideal friend and an ideal king. He can be taken to embody all the highest ideals of man. He led an ideal life of a householder to teach humanity. He ruled his people so nicely that his rule came to be called Rama Rajya meaning the rule of righteousness, the rule which bestows on all happiness and prosperity.

May Lord Rama bestow His choicest blessings on you all ! May He protect you all and bless you ! May you all live drowned in the ocean of divine ecstasy through constant repetition of Lord Rama's Name.

May Peace be unto all ! May prosperity be unto all ! May happiness be unto all !!!

Let us all sing,

“Om Sri Ram Jeya Ram Jeya Jeya Ram,
Om Sri Ram Jeya Ram Jeya Jeya Ram.”

2. RAMA RAJYA.

The Government of Sri Rama was an ideal one. Rama's kingdom was free from evil doers, thieves and dacoits. People did not put neither locks to the doors nor bars to their windows. A bag of gold could be kept quite safe even in the highways. No calamity ever befell on any one. The aged people never performed the funeral rites of the young. No one injured another. Everyone was devoted to Dharma (righteousness or duty). All the people always narrated Sri Rama's stories. They always uttered Rama Rama. The whole world reverberated with the name of Rama.

In due season rain and shine came. The air was fresh and cool. The trees were laden with plenty of fruits. There were abundant flowers of sweet fragrance. There were plenty of crops in the fields.

Every man had a long life. He had children and grandchildren. Wives were devoted to their husbands. They were chaste and pure.

All the people were hale and hearty. They were rich, contented and virtuous. They were free from disease, greed and sorrow. They were truthful, righteous and self-controlled. They led a pure and taintless life.

The Brahmins were well versed in the Vedas. They were virtuous. They stuck to their own duties. The Kshatriyas were brave. The Vaishyas and Sudras did their Swadharma. They were free from passion, greed and envy. The twice-born were faithful to the rites and scriptures. They were truthful in their words and deeds. They had God-fearing nature. They had love for all creatures.

The troops were very strong and brave. They were fierce like fire. They never retraced their steps in battle. They guarded the ramparts well.

There were neither want nor fear nor pain anywhere. The sons were noble and manly. The daughters were handsome, modest and pure.

Every town and province had plenty of gold and corn. Fathers never lost their children, nor do wives their husbands.

Poverty was unknown in Rama's kingdom. Everybody had horses, cattle, gold and grain. Nobody spoke falsehood. No one envied other's wealth. The poorest man was richly blessed with wealth, and knowledge.

Sri Rama's dominion was free from fire, flood, storm, fever, famine and disease.

Who can describe the glory of Rama's empire ? Hence it was called Rama Rajya.

3. ADITYAHRIDAYAM.

Prostrations to Sri Ganesha !

Then Muni Agastya saw Rama exhausted in battle and standing in a reflective mood with Ravana in front of him ready to fight.

He also saw the Devas who were witnessing the fight. Muni Agastya gently approached Lord Rama and spoke these words.

O Rama, O Rama ! the mighty armed one ! Hear thou this divine secret by knowing which you will defeat all your enemies in battle.

That is the Adityahridaya, very holy, which brings all success. It causes the destruction of the

opponents. You should repeat this which is the cause for supreme auspiciousness and undying bliss.

It destroys all sins and bestows the best of all auspicious objects. It is the destroyer of anxiety and grief and bestower of long life.

Worship the Sun God who is adored by the Devas and the Asuras equally, who is full of effulgent rays, who is the Lord of this universe and who is known as Vivaswan and Bhaskara.

He is the Self of all Devas. He is the most effulgent. He protects the Devas, Asuras and the other worlds with his rays.

He is Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, Skanda, Prajapati, Mahendra, Kubera, Time, Yama, Moon and Varuna.

He is also the Manes, Vasus, Sadhya, the two Aswins, Vayu, Manu, the Maruta, Agni, the Prajas (people), the Prana, the cause of Ritus and effulgent.

He is Aditya (son of Aditi), Savita, Surya, Khaga, Pusha, Bhanu and Gabhastiman (constituted of rays). He is endowed with beautiful colour and he causes the coming of the day.

He rides on seven green horses; he has thousands of rays ; he is the destroyer of darkness ; he grants auspiciousness ; he is Twasta. He is the son of Mritanda.

He is Hiranyagarbha, the first born, the giver of heat and cold, the giver of light. He is the son of Aditi. He has fire hidden in him. His colour is pure white and he is the destroyer of cold.

He is the Lord of the skies, the destroyer of darkness. He is well versed in the Vedas—Rig, Sama and Yajus. He causes heavy showers of rain. He

is the friend of waters. He moves along the path of Vindhya.

He is round. He is like unto Death. He burns everything by his heat. He is the great seer. He is the Universe. He is highly effulgent. He is of red colour also. He is the cause of everything.

O Sun ! prostrations unto the eastern mountains (where thou risest) and unto the western mountains. Prostrations to the Lord of luminaries and the Lord of the day.

Salutations to thee who art victory, who bestows all auspiciousness. Prostrations to thee with green horses, with thousands of rays, O son of Aditi.

Obeisance to the sun who is terrible, brave, who causes all activities. Prostrations to thee who art great and who causes lotuses to bloom.

Prostrations to the Sun who is effulgent, who is the Lord of even Brahma, Rudra and others, who enlightens everything and is the destroyer of all.

Obeisance to that Lord who destroys darkness and cold and all enemies, and the ungrateful. Prostrations to the God who is the Lord of all luminaries.

Prostrations to the Sun who resembles the colour of burnt gold, the shaper of the world. Thou art the witness of the activities of the whole world. Thou removest darkness (of ignorance).

Thou art the destroyer as well as the creator of everything. Thou protectest, scorcest and rainest by Thy powerful rays.

This immanent Lord wakes when all beings sleep. He is himself the Agnihotra (fire-obligations) and the fruit of the performers of Agnihotra.

He is the Lord of everything. He is the Lord of the gods, Kratus (sacrifices) and the fruit of sacrifices. He is the Lord of all actions that are being performed in this universe.

He who recites this prayer in great danger, in wild forest and in great fear becomes happy and fearless O Raghava.

Therefore do thou worship the Sun God who is the Lord of gods and of this universe. You will attain success in battle having repeated this but thrice.

This very moment you will defeat Ravana. So saying the great Agastya left Sri Rama's presence and disappeared.

Having heard this the valiant Rama lost all grief. He got ready for battle once again with a cheerful countenance.

Standing facing the sun he recited the prayer three times and did Achamana (sipping) thrice and remained calm.

Taking the bow in the hand looking at Ravana Rama made a strong resolve to kill Ravana immediately.

Knowing the destruction of the Rakshasa to be certain, the Sun God looking at Sri Rama standing amidst the Devas with a cheerful face said, "O Rama ! be quick."

Thus ends the Adityahridayam

Hari Om Tat Sat !!!

Om Santi Santi Santi !!!



॥ श्री नाम रामायणम् ॥

। बाल काण्डः ।

शुद्ध ब्रह्म परात्पर राम , कालात्मक परमेश्वर राम ।
 शेष तल्प सुख निद्रित राम , ब्रह्माद्यमर प्रार्थित राम ।
 चंड किरण कुल मण्डन राम , श्रोमदशरथ नन्दन राम ।
 कौसल्या सुख वर्धन राम , विश्वामित्र प्रिय धन राम ।
 घोर ताटका घातक राम , मारोचादि निपातक राम ।
 कौशिकमख संरक्षक राम , श्रोमदहल्योद्धारक राम ।
 गौतम मुनि संपूजित राम , सुर मुनिवर गण संस्तुत राम ।
 नाविक धावित मृदुपद राम , मिथिलापुर जन मोदद राम ।
 विदेह मानस रंजक राम , त्रयंबक कार्मुक भञ्जक राम ।
 सीतार्पित वरमालिक राम , कृत वैवाहिक कौतुक राम ।
 भार्गवदर्प विनाशक राम , श्रोमदयोध्या नन्दक राम ।

। अयोध्या काण्डः ।

अगणित गुणगण भूषित राम , अवनोकामिनो कामित राम ।
 राका चन्द्र समानन राम , पितृ वाक्याश्रित कानन राम ।
 प्रियगुह विनवेदितपद राम , तत्त्वालित निज मृदुपद राम ।
 भरद्वाजहृगा नन्दन राम , चित्रकूटाद्रि निकेतन राम ।
 दशरथ सन्तत चिन्तित राम , कैकेयी सुत प्रार्थित राम ।
 विरचित निज पितृ कर्मक राम , भरतार्पित निज पादुक राम ।

॥ आरण्य काण्डः ॥

दण्डकवन जन पावन राम , दुष्ट विराध विनाशन राम ।
 शरभंग सुतीक्ष्णार्चित राम , अगस्त्यानुग्रह वर्धित राम ।
 गृध्राधिप संसेवित राम , पंचवटी तट सुस्थित राम ।
 शूर्पणखार्ति विधायक राम , खरदूषण मुख साधक राम ।
 सीताप्रिय हरिणानुग राम , मारोचार्ति कृदाशुग राम ।
 विनष्ट सीतान्वेषक राम , गृध्राधिप गतिदायक राम ।
 शबरी दत्त फलाशन राम , कबन्ध बाहुच्छेदन राम ।

॥ किष्किन्धा काण्डः ॥

हनुमत्सेवित निजपद राम , नत सुग्रीवाऽभीष्टद राम ।
 गर्वित बालि संहारक राम , वानरदूत प्रेषक राम ।
 हितकर लक्ष्मण संयुत राम ॥

॥ सुन्दर काण्डः ॥

कपिवर संतत संस्मृत राम , तद्गतिविघ्न ध्वंसक राम ।
 सीताप्राणा धारक राम , दुष्टदशानन दूषित राम ।
 शिष्ट हनुमद भूषित राम , सीतोदित काकावन राम ।
 कृतचूडामणि दर्शन राम , कपिवर वचनाशवासित राम ।

॥ युद्ध काण्डः ॥

रावण निधन प्रस्थित राम , वानर सैन्य समावृत राम ।
 शोषित सरिदोशार्थन राम , विभीषणभयादायक राम ।
 पर्वत सेतु निबन्धक राम , घट कर्ण शिरच्छेदक राम ।
 राक्षस कोटि विमर्दक राम , अहिमहि रावण मारण राम ।
 संहत दशमुख रावण राम , विधि भवमुख सुर संस्तुतराम ।

स्वस्थितदशरथ वोक्षित राम , सीतादर्शन मोदित राम ॥
 अभिषिक्त विभीषणानुत राम , पुष्पक यानारोहण राम ।
 भरद्वाजादि निषेवण राम , भरत प्राणन वितरण राम ।
 साकेतपुरी भूषण राम , सकल स्वोय समावृत राम ।
 रत्नल सत्पीठास्थित राम , पट्टाभिषेकालिंकृत राम ।
 पार्थिवकुल संमानित राम , विभीषणार्पित रंगक राम ।
 कीश कुलानुग्राहक राम , सकल जीव संरक्षक राम ।
 समस्त लोकाधारक राम , राम राम जय राजा राम ।
 राम राम जय सीताराम ॥

॥ हरि ॐ तत्सत् ॥

॥ श्री राम अष्टोत्तरशत नाम स्तोत्रम् ॥

श्री रामो राम भद्रश्च राम चन्द्रश्च शाश्वतः ।
 राजीव लोचनः श्रीमान् राजेन्द्रो रघुपुंगवः ॥ १ ॥
 जानकीवल्लभो जैत्रो जितामित्रो जनार्दनः ।
 विश्वामित्रप्रियो दान्तः शरणा त्राण तत्परः ॥ २ ॥
 वालि प्रमथनो वाग्मो सत्यवाक् सत्य विक्रमः ।
 सत्यव्रतो व्रतधरः सदा हनुमदाश्रितः ॥ ३ ॥
 कौसलेयः खरध्वंसी विराध बध पण्डितः ।
 विभीषण परित्राता हर कोदण्ड खण्डनः ॥ ४ ॥
 सप्तताल प्रमेत्ता च दशग्रीव शिरोहरः ।
 जामदग्न्य महादर्प दलनस्ताटकान्तकः ॥ ५ ॥
 वेदान्तसारो वेदात्मा भवरोगस्य भेषजम् ।
 दूषणस्त्रिशिरोहन्ता त्रिमूर्तिस्त्रिगुणात्मकः ॥ ६ ॥

त्रिविक्रम स्त्रिलोकात्मा पुण्य चारित्र कीर्तनः ।
 त्रिलोकरक्षको धन्वी दण्डकारण्य कर्त्तनः ॥ ७ ॥
 अहल्या शापशमनः पितृभक्तो वर प्रदः ।
 जितेन्द्रियो जितक्रोधो जितामित्रो जगद्गुरुः ॥ ८ ॥
 ऋक्षवानर संघाती चित्रकूट समाश्रयः ।
 जयन्त त्राण वरदः सुमित्रा पुत्र सेवितः ॥ ९ ॥
 सर्वदेवादिदेवश्च मृतवानर जीवनः ।
 माया मारीच हन्ता च महादेवो महाभुजः ॥ १० ॥
 सर्वदेवस्तुतसौम्यो ब्रह्मण्यो मुनि संस्तुतः ।
 महायोगो महोदार सुग्रीवेप्सित राज्यदः ॥ ११ ॥
 सर्वपुण्याधिकफलः स्मृत सर्वाधनाशनः ।
 आदिपुरुषः परम पुरुषः महापुरुष एव च ॥ १२ ॥
 पुण्योदयो दयासारः पुराणपुरुषोत्तमः ।
 स्मितवक्त्रो मितभाषी पूर्वभाषी च राघव ॥ १३ ॥
 अनन्त गुण गंभीरो धीरोदात्त गुणोत्तमः ।
 माया मानुष चारित्रो महादेवादि पूजितः ॥ १४ ॥
 सेतुकृज्जितवाराशिः सर्वतीर्थमयो हरिः ।
 श्यामांगसुन्दरः शूरः पीतवासा धनुर्धरः ॥ १५ ॥
 सर्व यज्ञाधिपो यज्ञा जरामरण वर्जितः ।
 विभोषण प्रतिष्ठाता सर्वापगुण वर्जितः ॥ १६ ॥
 परमात्मा परब्रह्म सच्चिदानन्द विग्रहः ।
 परं ज्योतिः परं धाम पराकाशः परात्परः ॥
 परेशः पारगः पारः सर्वदेवात्मकः परः ॥ १७ ॥
 इति श्री राम श्लोत्तरशत नाम स्तोत्रं समाप्तम्

। राम हृदयम् ।

श्री गणेशाय नमः ।

श्री महादेव उवाच ।

ततो रामः स्वयं प्राह हनूमन्तमुपस्थितम् ।
 शृणु तत्त्वं प्रवक्ष्यामि ह्यात्मानात्म परात्मनाम् ॥ १ ॥
 आकाशस्य यथा भेदस्त्रिविधो दृश्यते महान् ।
 जलाशये महाकाशस्तदवच्छिन्न एव हि ॥ २ ॥
 प्रतिविम्बाख्यमपरं दृश्यते त्रिविधं नमः ।
 बुद्ध्यवच्छिन्न चैतन्यमेकं पूर्णमथापरम् ॥ ३ ॥
 आभासस्त्वपरं बिम्ब भूतमेवं त्रिधा चितिः ।
 साभासबुद्धेः कर्तृत्वमविच्छिन्नेऽविकारिणि ॥ ४ ॥
 सान्निध्यारोप्यते भ्रान्त्या जीवत्वं च तथाऽबुधैः ।
 आभासस्तु मृषा बुद्धिरविद्या कार्यमुच्यते ॥ ५ ॥
 अविच्छिन्नं तु तद्ब्रह्म विच्छेदस्तु विकल्पितः ।
 अविच्छिन्नस्य पूर्णेन एकत्वं प्रतिपाद्यते ॥ ६ ॥
 तत्त्वमस्यादि वाक्यैश्च साभासस्याहमस्तथा ।
 ऐक्य ज्ञानं यदोत्पन्नं महावाक्येन चात्मनोः ॥ ७ ॥
 तदाविद्यास्वकार्यैश्च नश्यत्येव न संशयः ।
 एतद्विज्ञाय भङ्गको मद्भावायोपपद्यते ॥ ८ ॥
 मद्भक्ति विमुखानां हि शास्त्र गर्तेषु मुह्यताम् ।
 न ज्ञानं न च मोक्षः स्यात्तेषां जन्मशतैरपि ॥ ९ ॥

इदं रहस्यं हृदयं ममात्मनो मयैव साक्षात्
कथितं तवानघ ।

मद्भक्तिं हीनाय शठाय न त्वया दातव्यं मैन्द्रादपि
राज्यं तोऽधिकम् ॥ १० ॥

॥ इति राम हृदयं संपूर्णम् ॥

ॐ

। आदित्य हृदयम् ।

श्री गणेशाय नमः ।

ततो युद्धं परिश्रान्तं समरे चिन्तया स्थितम् ।
रावणं चाप्रतो हृष्टा युद्धाय समुपस्थितम् ॥ १ ॥

दैवतैश्च समागम्य द्रष्टुमभ्यागतो रणम् ।
उपगम्यान्नवीद्राममगस्त्यो भगवाँस्तदा ॥ २ ॥

राम राम महाबाहो शृणु गुह्यं सनातनम् ।
येन सर्वानरी न्वत्स समरे विजयिष्यसे ॥ ३ ॥

आदित्य हृदयं पुण्यं सर्वशत्रु विनाशनम् ।
जयावहं जपेन्नित्यमक्षयं परमं शिवम् ॥ ४ ॥

सर्वमंगल मांगल्यं सर्वं पाप प्रनाशनम् ।
चिन्ताशोक प्रशमनं आयुर्वर्धनमुत्तमम् ॥ ५ ॥

रश्मिमन्तं समुद्यन्तं देवासुर नमस्कृतम् ।
पूजयस्व विवस्वन्तं भास्करं भुवनेश्वरम् ॥ ६ ॥

सर्वदेवात्मको ह्येष तेजस्वी रश्मि भावनः ।
एष देवासुरगणान् लोकान्पातु गमस्तिभिः ॥ ७ ॥

एष ब्रह्मा च विष्णुश्च शिवः स्कन्दः प्रजापतिः ।
 महेन्द्रो धनदः कालो यमः सोमो ह्यपांपतिः ॥ ८ ॥
 पितरो वसवः साध्या अश्विनौ मरुतो मनुः ।
 वायुर्वह्निः प्रजाप्राणा ऋतुकर्ता प्रभाकरः ॥ ९ ॥
 आदित्यः सविता सूर्यः खगः पूषा गभस्तिमान् ।
 सुवर्णस्तपनो भानुः स्वर्णरेता दिवाकरः ॥ १० ॥
 हरिदश्वः सहस्रार्चिः सप्तसप्तिर्मरीचिमान् ।
 तिमिरोन्मथनः शंभुस्त्वष्टा मार्ताण्डकोऽशुमान् ॥ ११ ॥
 हिरण्यगर्भः शिशिरस्तपनो भास्करो रविः ।
 अग्निगर्भोऽदितेः पुत्रःशंखः शिशिर नाशनः ॥ १२ ॥
 व्योमनाथस्तमो भेदी ऋग्यजुः सामपारगः ।
 धनवृष्टिरपांमित्रो विन्ध्यवीथी प्लवङ्गमः ॥ १३ ॥
 आतपी मण्डली मृत्युः पिङ्गलः सर्वतापनः ।
 कविर्विश्वो महातेजा रक्तः सर्वभवोद्भवः ॥ १४ ॥
 नक्षत्र ग्रहताराणामधिपो विश्व भावनः ।
 तेजसामपि तेजस्वी द्वादशात्मन्नमोस्तुते ॥ १५ ॥
 नमः पूर्वाय गिरये पश्चिमायाद्वये नमः ।
 ज्योतिर्गणानां पतये दिनाधिपतये नमः ॥ १६ ॥
 जयाय जयभद्राय हर्यश्वाय नमो नमः ।
 नमोनमः सहस्रांशो आदित्याय नमो नमः ॥ १७ ॥
 नम उग्राय वीराय सारङ्गाय नमो नमः ।
 नमः पद्म प्रबोधाय प्रचण्डाय नमोस्तुते ॥ १८ ॥
 ब्रह्मेशानाच्युतेशाय सूरयादित्यवर्चसे ।
 भास्वते सर्वभक्षाय रौद्राय वपुषे नमः ॥ १९ ॥

तमोघ्नाय हिमघ्नाय शत्रुघ्नायामितात्मने ।
कृतघ्नघ्नाय देवाय ज्योतिषां पतये नमः ॥ २० ॥

तप्त चामीकराभाय हरये विश्वकर्मणे ।
नमस्तमोऽभिनिघ्नाय रुचये लोकसाक्षिणे ॥ २१ ॥

नाशयत्येष वै भूतं तदेव सृजति प्रभुः ।
पायत्येष तपत्येष वर्षत्येष गभस्तिभिः ॥ २२ ॥

एष सुप्रेषु जागर्तिः भूतेषु परिनिष्ठितः ।
एष चैवाग्निहोत्रं च फलं चैवाग्निहोत्रिणाम् ॥ २३ ॥

देवाश्च क्रतवश्चैव क्रतूनां फलमेव च ।
यानि कृत्यानि लोकेषु सर्वेषु परमप्रभुः ॥ २४ ॥

दानमापसु कृच्छ्रेषु कान्तारेषु भयेषु च ।
कीर्तयन्पुरुषः कश्चिन्नावसीदति राघव ॥ २५ ॥

पूजयस्वैनमेकाग्रो देवदेवं जगत्पतिम् ।
एतत्त्रिगुणितं जप्त्वा युद्धेषु विजयिष्यसि ॥ २६ ॥

अस्मिन्क्षणे महाबाहो रावणं त्वं जहिष्यसि ।
एवमुक्त्वा ततोऽगस्त्यो जगाम स यथागतम् ॥ २७ ॥

एतच्छ्रुत्वा महातेजा नष्टशोकोऽभवत्तदा ।
धारयामास सुप्रीतो राघवः प्रयतात्मवान् ॥ २८ ॥

आदित्यं प्रेक्ष्य जप्त्वेदं परं हर्षमवाप्तवान् ।
त्रिराचम्य शुचिर्भूत्वा धनुरादाय वीर्यवान् ॥ २९ ॥

रावणं प्रेक्ष्य हृष्टात्मा युद्धाय समुपागमत् ।
सर्वयत्नेन महता वधे तस्य धृतोऽभवत् ॥ ३० ॥

अथ रविरवदन्निरीक्ष्य रामं मुदितमनाः ।
 निशिचरं प्रति संचर्यविदित्वा सुर गण मध्य
 गतो वचस्त्वरेति ॥ ३१ ॥

इति आदित्य हृदय स्तोत्रं समाप्तम् ।

॥ श्रीराम गीता ॥

श्री गणेशाय नमः ।

श्री महादेव उवाच ।

ततो जगन्मङ्गल मङ्गलात्मना विधाय रामायण
 कीर्तिमुत्तमाम् ।
 चचार पूर्वाचरितं रघूत्तमो राजर्षिवर्यैरभि
 सेवितं यथा ॥ १ ॥

सौमित्रिणा पृष्ट उदार बुद्धिना रामः कथाः
 प्राह पुरातनीः शुभाः ॥ १ ॥
 राजः प्रमत्तस्य नृगस्य शापतो द्विजस्य
 तिर्यक्त्वमथाह राघवः ॥ २ ॥

कदाचिदेकान्त उपस्थितं प्रभुं रामं
 रमालालित पाद पङ्कजम् ।
 सौमित्रिरासादित शुद्ध भावनः प्रणम्य भक्त्या
 विनयान्वितोऽब्रवीत् ॥ ३ ॥

सौमित्रिरुवाच ॥

त्वं शुद्ध बोधोऽसि हि सर्वं देहिनात्मास्य धीशोऽसि
 निराकृतिः स्वयम् ।
 प्रतीयसे ज्ञानदृशां महामते पादाब्ज भृंगाहित
 संग संगिनाम् ॥ ४ ॥

अहं प्रपन्नोऽस्मि पदांबुजं प्रभो भवापवर्गो
 तव योगि भावितम् ।
 यथाञ्जसाज्ञानमपार वारिधिं सुखं तरिष्यामि
 तथानुशाधिमाम् ॥ ५ ॥

श्रुत्वाथ सौमित्रि वचोऽखिलं तदा प्राह प्रपन्नार्ति-
 हरः प्रसन्न धीः ।
 विज्ञानमज्ञान तमोपशान्तये श्रुतिप्रपन्नं
 क्षितिपाल भूषणः ॥ ६ ॥

श्रीराम उवाच ।

आदौ स्ववर्णाश्रम वर्णिताः क्रियाः कृत्वा
 समासादित शुद्धमानसः ।
 समाप्य तत्पूर्वमुपात्तसाधनः समाश्रयेत्स-
 द्गुरुमात्म लब्धये ॥ ७ ॥

क्रिया शरीरोद्भवहेतुरादृता प्रियाप्रियौ तौ
 भवतः सुरागिणः ।
 धर्मेतरौ तत्र पुनः शरीरकं पुनः क्रिया
 चक्रवदीर्यते भवः ॥ ८ ॥

अज्ञानमेवास्य हि मूल कारणं तद्वानमेवात्र
 विधौ विधीयते ।
 विद्यैव तन्नाश विधौ पटीयसी न कर्म न ज्ञं
 सविरोधमीरितम् ॥ ९ ॥

ना ज्ञान हानिर्न च राग संक्षयो भवेत्ततः
 कर्म सदोषमुद्भवेत् ।
 ततः पुनः संसृति रप्यवारिता तस्माद्बुधो
 ज्ञान विचारवान् भवेत् ॥ १० ॥

ननु क्रिया वेद मुखेन चोदिता यथैव विद्या
पुरुषार्थ साधनम् ।

कर्तव्यता प्राणभृतः प्रचोदिता विद्या

सहायत्वमुपैनि सा पुनः ॥ ११ ॥

कर्माकृतौ दोषमपि श्रुतिर्जगौ तस्मात्सदा कार्यमिदं मुमुक्षुणा ।

ननु स्वतन्त्रा ध्रुवकार्य कारिणी विद्या न

किञ्चिन्मनसा व्यपेक्षते ॥ १२ ॥

न सत्य कार्योऽपि हि यद्वदध्वरः प्रकाञ्चतेऽन्यानपि कारकादिकान् ।

तथैवविद्या विधितः प्रकाशितैर्विशिष्यते

कर्मभिरेव मुक्तये ॥ १३ ॥

केचिद्वदन्तीति वितर्कं वादिनस्तदप्यसदृष्टं विरोध कारणात् ।

देहाभिमानादभिवर्धते क्रिया विद्यागता

हंकृतिः प्रसिध्यति ॥ १४ ॥

विशुद्ध विज्ञानविरोचनाश्चिता विद्यात्म वृत्तिश्चरमेति भण्यते ।

उदेति कर्माखिल कारकादिभिर्निहन्ति

विद्याऽखिल कारकादिकम् ॥ १५ ॥

तस्मात्त्यजेत्कार्यमशेषतः सुधीर्विद्या विरोधान्न समुच्चयो भवेत् ।

आत्मानुसंधानपरायणः सदा निवृत्तस-

र्वेन्द्रिय वृत्ति गोचरः ॥ १६ ॥

यावच्छरीरादिषु माययात्मधोस्तावद्विधेयो विधिवाद कर्मणाम् ।

नेतीति वाक्यैरखिलं निषिध्यतज्ज्ञात्वा

परात्मा नमथ त्यजेत्क्रियाः ॥ १७ ॥

यदा परात्मात्मविभेद भेदकं विज्ञान मात्मन्य व भाति भास्वरम् ।

तदैव माया प्रविलीयतेऽञ्जसा सकारका

कारणमात्म संसृतेः ॥ १८ ॥

तिप्रमाणाभिविनाशिता च सा कथं भविष्यत्यपि कार्यकारिणी ।
 विज्ञानमात्रादमलाद्वितीयतस्तस्माद्विद्या
 न पुनर्भविष्यति ॥ १९ ॥

।दि स्म नष्टा न पुनः प्रसूयते कर्ताहमस्येति मतिः कथं भवेत् ।
 तस्मात्स्वतन्त्रा न किमप्यपेक्षते विद्या
 विमोक्षाय विभातिकेवला ॥ २० ॥

ज्ञा तैत्तिरीय श्रुतिराह सादरं न्यासं प्रशस्ताखिल कर्मणां स्फुटम् ।
 एतावदित्याह च वाजिनां श्रुतिर्ज्ञानं
 विमोक्षाय न कर्म साधनम् ॥ २१ ॥

विद्यासमत्वेन तु दर्शितस्त्वया क्रतुर्न दृष्टान्त उदाहृतः समः ।
 फलैः पृथक्त्वाद्वहुकारकैः क्रतुः
 संसाध्यते ज्ञानमतो विपर्ययम् ॥ २२ ॥

स प्रत्यवायो ह्यह मित्यनात्म धीरज्ञ प्रसिद्धा न तु तत्त्वदर्शिनः ।
 तस्माद्बुधैस्त्याज्यमपि क्रियात्मभिर्विधानतः
 कर्म विधिप्रकाशितम् ॥ २३ ॥

श्रद्धान्वितस्तत्त्वमसीति वाक्यतो गुरोः प्रसादादपि शुद्धमानसः ।
 विज्ञाय चैकात्म्यमथात्म जीवयोः सुखी
 भवेन्मेरुरिवाप्रकम्पनः ॥ २४ ॥

आदौ पदार्थावगतिर्हि कारणं वाक्यार्थं विज्ञानविधौ विधानतः ।
 तत्त्वंपदार्थौ परमात्म जीवका व सीति चैकात्म्य
 मथानयोर्भवेत् ॥ २५ ॥

प्रत्यक्परोक्षादिविरोधमामनोर्विहाय संगृह्य तयोश्चिदात्मताम् ।
 संशोधितां लक्षणया च लक्षितां ज्ञात्वा
 स्वमात्मानमथाद्वयो भवेत् ॥ २६ ॥

एकात्मकत्वा जहती न संभवेत्तथा जह हृत्क्षणा विरोधतः ।

सोऽयं पदार्थाविव भागलक्षणा युष्येत

तत्त्वं पदयोरदोषतः ॥ २७ ॥

रसादि पञ्चीकृत भूतसंभवं भोगालयं दुःख सुखादि कर्मणाम् ।

शरीर माद्यन्त वदादि कर्मजं मायामयं

स्थूल मुपाधिमात्मनः ॥ २८ ॥

सूक्ष्मं मनोबुद्धि दशेन्द्रियैर्युतं प्राणैरपञ्ची कृत भूत संभवम् ।

भोक्तुः सुरवादेरनुसाधनं भवेच्छरीर

मन्यद्विदुरात्मनो बुधाः ॥ २९ ॥

अनाद्यनिर्वाच्यमपीह कारणं मायाप्रधानं तु परं शरीरकम् ।

उपाधि भेदान्तु यतः पृथक्स्थितं स्वात्मा-

नमात्मन्यव धारयेत्कमात् ॥ ३० ॥

कोशेषु पञ्चस्वपि तत्तदा कृतिर्विभाति संग्तास्फटिकोपलो यथा ।

असंग रूपोऽयमजो यतोऽद्वयो विज्ञायतेऽ-

स्मिन्परितो विचारिते ॥ ३१ ॥

बुद्धेस्त्रिधा वृत्तिरपीह दृश्यते स्वप्नादि भेदे न गुण ययात्मनः ।

अन्योन्यतोऽस्मिन्व्यभिचारतो मृषा

नित्ये परे ब्रह्मणि केवले शिवे ॥ ३२ ॥

देहेन्द्रियप्राणमनश्चिदात्मनां संघादजस्रं परिवर्तते धियः ।

• वृत्तिस्तमोमूल तयाऽज्ञलक्षणा यावद्भव

त्तावदसौ भवोद्भवः ॥ ३३ ॥

नेति प्रमाणेन निराकृ ताखि लो हृदा समास्वादितचिद्व नामृतः ।

त्यजेदशेषं जगदान्त सद्रसं पीत्वा यथाम्भः

प्रजहाति तत्फलम् ॥ ३४ ॥

कदाचिदात्मान मृतो न जायते न क्षीयते नापि विवर्धते नवः ।

निरस्त सर्वातिशयः सुखात्मकः स्वयं

प्रभः सर्वं गतोऽयमद्वयः ॥ ३५ ॥

एवं विधे ज्ञानमये सुखात्मके कथंभवो दुःखमयः प्रतीयते ।

अज्ञानतोऽध्यासवशात्प्रकाशते ज्ञाते विलीयेत

विरोधतः क्षणात् ॥ ३६ ॥

यदन्यदन्यत्र विभाव्यते भ्रमादध्यासमि त्याहुरमुं विपश्चितः ।

असर्पं भूतेऽहि विभावनं यथा रज्ज्वादिके

तद्वदपीश्वरे जगत् ॥ ३७ ॥

विकल्पमायारहिते चिदात्मकेऽहंकार एषः प्रथमः प्रकल्पितः ।

अध्यास एवात्मनि सर्वं कारणे निरामये

ब्रह्मणि केवले परे ॥ ३८ ॥

इच्छादि रागादिमुखादि धर्मिकाः सदाधियः संसृतिहेतवः परे ।

यस्मात्प्रसुप्तौ तद् भावतः परः सुख स्वरूपेण

विभाव्यते हि नः ॥ ३९ ॥

अनाद्यविद्योद्भव बुद्धि बिम्बितो जीवः प्रकाशोऽयमितीयते चितः ।

आत्माधियः साक्षितया पृथक्स्थितो बुद्ध्या ।

परिच्छिन्नपरः स एव हि ॥ ४० ॥

चिद्विम्ब साक्षात्मधियां प्रसङ्गस्त्वेक तत्र वातादनलाक्त लोहवत् ।

अन्योन्यमध्या सवशा ज्यतीयते जडा जडत्वं

च चिदात्मचेतसोः ॥ ४१ ॥

गुरोः सकाशादपि वेद वाक्यतः संजातविद्यानुभवो निरीक्ष्य तम् ।

स्वात्मानमात्मस्थमुपाधि वर्जितं त्यजेदशेषं

जडमात्म गोचरम् ॥ ४२ ॥

प्रकाशरूपोऽहमजोऽहमद्वयोऽसकृद्विभातोऽहमतीव निर्मलः ।
 विशुद्धविज्ञानधनो निरामयः संपूर्ण आन-
 न्द मयोऽहमक्रियः ॥ ४३ ॥

सदैव मुक्तोऽहमचिन्त्यशक्तिमानतीन्द्रिय ज्ञानमविक्रियात्मकः ।
 अनन्त पारोऽनमहर्निशं बुधैर्विभावितोऽहं
 हृदि वेदवादिभि ॥ ४४ ॥

एवं सदात्मानमखण्डितात्मनाविचार्यमाणस्य विशुद्ध भावना ।
 हन्यादविद्यामचिरेण कारकै रसायनं
 यद्वदुपासितं रुजः ॥ ४५ ॥

विविक्त आसीन उपारतेन्द्रियो विनिर्जितात्मा विमलान्त राशयः ।
 विभावयेदेक मनन्य साधनो विज्ञान हृक्केवल
 आत्मसंस्थितः ॥ ४६ ॥

विश्वं यदेतत्परमात्मदर्शनं विलाप येदात्मनि सर्वकारणे ।
 पूर्णं श्रिदानन्दमयोऽवतिष्ठते न वेद बाह्यं
 न च किञ्चिदान्तरम् ॥ ४७ ॥

पूर्वं समाधेरखिलं विचिन्तयेदोङ्कारमात्रं सचराचरं जगत् ।
 तदेव वाच्यं प्रणवो हि वाचको विभाव्यते
 ज्ञान वशान्न बोधतः ॥ ४८ ॥

अ कारसंज्ञः पुरुषो हि विश्वको ह्यकारक स्तै जस ईर्यते क्रमात् ।
 प्रज्ञो मकारः परि पठ्यतेऽखिलैः समाधिपूर्वं
 न तु तत्त्वतो भवेत् ॥ ४९ ॥

विश्वं त्वकारं पुरुषं विलापयेदुकारमध्ये बहुधा व्यवस्थितम् ।
 त तो मकारे प्रविलाप्य तैजसं द्वितीयवर्णं
 प्रणवस्य चान्तिमम् ॥ ५० ॥

मकारं मयात्मनि चिद्वने परे विलापयेत्प्रह्वमपीह कारणम् ।
 सोऽहं परं ब्रह्म सदा विमुक्तिं मद्भिः ज्ञानदृङ्
 मुक्त उपाधितोऽमलः ॥ ५१ ॥

एवं सदा जातपरात्मभावनः स्वानन्दतुष्टः परि विस्मृताखिलः ।
 आस्ते स नित्यात्मसुखप्रकाशकः साक्षा
 द्विमुक्तोऽचल वारि सिन्धुवत् ॥ ५२ ॥

एवं सदाभ्यस्तसमाधियोगिनो निवृत्तसर्वेन्द्रिय गोचरस्य हि ।
 विनिर्जिताशेषरिपोरहं सदा दृश्यो भवेयं
 जितषड्गुणात्मनः ॥ ५३ ॥

ध्यात्वैव मात्मानमहर्निशं मुनिस्तिष्ठेत्सदा मुक्त समस्त बन्धनः ।
 प्रारब्धमशनन्नभिमानं वर्जितो मय्येव
 साक्षात्प्रविलीयते ततः ॥ ५४ ॥

आदौ च मध्ये च तथैव चान्ततो भवं विदित्वा भयशोक कारणम् ।
 हित्वा समस्तं विधिं वादं चोदितं भजेत्स्व
 मात्मानमथाखिलात्मनाम् ॥ ५५ ॥

आत्मन्यभेदेन विभावयन्निदं भवत्यभेदेन मयात्मना तदा ।
 यथा जलं वारिनिधौ यथा पयः क्षीरे
 वियद्योऽन्यनिले यथानिलः ॥ ५६ ॥

इत्थं यदीक्षेत हि लोक संस्थितो जगन्मृषैवेति विभावयन्मुनिः ।
 निराकृतत्वाच्छ्रुतियुक्तिमान्तो यथेन्दु
 भेदो दिशि दिग्भ्रमादयः ॥ ५७ ॥

यावन्तं पश्येदखिलं मदात्मकं तावन्मदा राधनतत्परो भवेत् ।
 श्रद्धालुरत्यूर्जित भक्ति लक्षणो यस्तस्य
 दृश्योऽहं महर्निशं हृदि ॥ ५८ ॥

रहस्यमेतच्छ्रुतिसारसंग्रहं मया विनिश्चित्य तवोदितं प्रिय ।

यस्त्वे तदालोचयतीह बुद्धिमान्स मुच्यते

पातक राशिभिः क्षणात् ॥ ५९ ॥

भ्रातर्यदीदं परिदृश्यते जगन्मायैव सर्वं परिहृत्य चेतसा ।

मद्भावना भावितशुद्धमानसः सुखी भवान-

न्दमयो निरामयः ॥ ६० ॥

यः सेवते मामगुणं गुणात्परं हृदा कदा वा यदि वा गुणात्मकम् ।

सोऽहं स्वपादाश्रितरेणुभिः स्पृशन्पुनाति

लोकत्रितयं यथा रविः ॥ ६१ ॥

विज्ञानमेतद् खिलं श्रुतिसारमेकं वेदान्त वेद्यचरणेन मयैव गीतम् ।

यः श्रद्धया परि पठेद्गुरु भक्तियुक्तो

मद्रूपमेति यदि मद्र चनेषु भक्तिः ॥ ६२ ॥

॥ इति रामगीता समाप्ता ॥

हरि ॐ तत् सत्

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ।

Books by the same author

I have read a good many of your works. I have been greatly inspired by many of your words.

(Sd.) ERNEST BRUSKIN,

Forest Adviser to the Tehri State..

Your extraordinary kindness simply overwhelmed me. I took it as a grace of God. Blessings of saints cannot be had otherwise.

(Sd.) RAMADAYALU SINHA,

Speaker's Chamber, Patna.

Now I can imagine a little house at which you are living and from whence I get so much happiness and joy. Your letters bring to me a great joy and I feel as if it is a feast when I receive the letters from you. I never forget you and constantly think of you and thank Lord Siva for his kindness to ignorant people.

(Sd.) AL. MINEEFF, London.

There are many now in this world who have realised that God-consciousness alone is worth trying for, but who, on account of long association with pleasures of senses, are unable to rise above them and to march towards the supreme goal. To such people you are a sure beacon light and your instructions, your pamphlets, and your books lead them onward step by step, warning them of pitfalls at almost every step. May God help you in all your efforts.

I am having the fortune of going through some of your pamphlets and books and have derived great benefit from them. My doubts have been cleared and I am able to go onward.

(Sd.) P. R. YAGNANARAYANIER,
Board High School, Musiri.

I found your instructions on Yōga very helpful and all your writings very inspiring.

(Sd.) ALDO LAVAGNINI, Mexico, D. F.

I have just read your article: "Yoga for students." It is Truth Divine expressed in language of simple beauty.

(Sd.) MRS. GRACE TAYLOR, America.

Your spiritual activities are highly praised and appreciated by those who know you.

(Sd.) BALDEO UPADHYA, Professor
Benares Hindu University.

A cursory look through the literature you sent has made me realise that it is of solid worth from a spiritual point of view.

(Sd.) MAHA RAJAH SAHEB OF JHALAWAR
STATE, Brijnagar.

I find in you the blending of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekanandaji, whose bold teachings and robust optimism have revolutionised the mental debasement and stupor of Indians. You have likewise undertaken a stupendous task for the amelioration of humanity and may all your efforts be crowned with success.

(Sd.) KANTI LAL SHAH, Ahmedabad.

It was one of my greatest desires to see your Holiness, the reason of my short visit in July last. I was greatly impressed by the sanctity and loveliness of Ananda Kutir, and my mind tells me that a sojourn in your holy company would certainly help me in attaining Kaivalyajnana.

(Sd.) GEROGES ZUTSELER, Achalgarh,
Mt. Abu.

Your august existence in this world is really a blessing to the world and to the humanity and is a constant source of inspiration to the lovers of truth and divine life.

(Sd.) HEMRAJ MAKHIJA, Entomological
Assistant, Fort Sandeman.

The Book : Mind, Its Mysteries and Control, gives a lot of useful information and advice for the guidance of the Sadhaks.

I have read the Bhakti Yoga and have commenced Karma Yoga. There is a lot of useful knowledge and practical instructions for the guidance of the aspirants. I hope to take full advantage of the same.

(Sd.) MOHAN LAL SAXENA, M. L. A.,
Lucknow.

I was greatly honoured and blessed to receive your publications. Permit me kindly to express to you my deepest devotion and best wishes. May God sustain you in good health for your divine service in this world in its time of need.

(Sd.) DR. KAREL HUJER, Chicago, III.

The spiritual effect remained about one year after my visit to your Holiness. I feel that every year I

should have Darshan of your Holiness as it has marvellous effect on Sadhaks. That is my experience. Magnetism of your personal gaze is most essential to a Sadhak like me. I read books written by your Holiness and thus try to remain in touch with your Holiness.

(Sd.) RATILAL R. KALOLA, B. A, LL. B.,
Bombay.

I have taken refuge in your Holiness's Gita. It is a solace to me and in my solitude, its reading enthralls me with it.. I pray to Lord daily for granting me devotion to His Holy feet under the direction of your Holiness whose grace has put me on the path.

(Sd.) NARSINGH PRASAD, Additional
Munsif, Motihari, Dt. Champaran.

Till four years ago, I was highly rationalistic and somewhat agnostic. I happened to come across your books and since then read one after another. I was attracted to read most of your books which brought about a change in me. Your simple and plain writing attracted me more than anything else.

(Sd.) P. POLI REDDY,
Prosecuting Inspector of Police, Cuddapah.

I had the privilege to read many of your books on Yoga and I must own that your books have served me as a key to the hidden spiritual treasures of our land. I have become a Sadhak after reading your books and spiritually-minded ever since. Your books are so simple and lucid that anybody could practise Sadhana without any guide. They are a guide.

themselves. Your service to the country in this respect is admirable.

(Sd.) CHALLAPALI SURYANARAYANA RAO,
B. A., B. L., Vakil, Bezwada.

I have gone through some of the books by Swamiji including 'Sure Ways for success in life and God-realisation,' and they are a marvel of extremely abstruse subject in a foreign language which fortunately is unfortunately easier to understand by people of modern times than our own mother tongue. Please convey my deep sense of admiration and respect for the incalculable good he is doing to humanity by his noble precepts and exposition of Sanatana Dharma.

(Sd.) SRI ANANDA BIHARI LAL,
Advocate, Fatehgarh.

I am getting regular lessons on Yoga Philosophy from your august self in dreams. I myself is quite ignorant of Yoga theory, yet my Swamiji has given me some power by giving me his Darshans in my sweet dreams.

(Sd.) M. R. SIBAL,
Assistant Traffic Investigation Officer,
Hyderabad (Sind).

WHAT THE PUBLIC SPEAK OF SRI SWAMIJI'S THIRTEEN GRAMOPHONE RECORDS

Received the set of gramophone records you kindly sent me. The set has been very much appreciated by the people here and my house is nearly every time filled with the chants of the music of the Yog. It is the first time for me to hear a Yogi. The voice is so peculiar that it attracts everybody,

makes him stand a while and listen. Perhaps it is the force of the truth and spiritual development.

SRI K. G. MEHROTRA, M.A., Bareilly.

I have received the 13 records. I and my family have been greatly solaced and benefited by the Kirtans and golden instructions contained therein. The effect is electrifying and can hardly be described in words.

(Sd.) SRI BABU NARSINGH PRASAD,
B. A. LL. B., Additional Munsif,

Motihari.

The gramophone records reached me quite safely. The speeches and Kirtans are very inspiring indeed, and I am hearing them very often and as time permits. The members of my family like it immensely and the ladies of my household and the children have already got by heart a good portion of the Kirtans.

(Sd.) SRI P. JEEVAN RAO,

Madras.

The speeches in the records are really magnificent.

(Sd.) THE NATIONAL GRAMOPHONE MFG. CO., LTD.,
Bombay.

Your grace has been felt by many and I know that a number of atheists have turned to a godly life by hearing the 13 inspiring records which are my most precious possessions.

(Sd.) DR. V. S. MANI,
L. M. S., Villupuram.

THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY, RIKHIKESH

The Divine Life Society was established by H. H. Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj in 1936 for the dissemination of spiritual knowledge far and wide and to help all aspirants in a practical manner. It has many branches in India and abroad.

ACTIVITIES

Spiritual instructions are imparted through correspondence in all branches of *Yoga*. Students are trained at "Ananda-Kutir" in *Yoga*, *Bakhti*, and *Vedanta*. Regular classes in these different branches are held, apart from common prayers and meditation in the mornings and *Kirtan* and *Bhajan* in the evenings.

After the aspirants have received sufficient training they are sent out to preach and disseminate Divine knowledge. Gramophone records which contain the speeches in English of Swamiji, and his *Kirtan* and English philosophical songs, magic lantern demonstration on philosophy, *Yoga*, *Ramayana*, *Gita* and movie are taken recourse to for spreading knowledge of *Yoga*, *Vedanta* and *Bhakti*.

The "Divine Life Sadhana" is held for a week in X'mas and in the Easter Holidays. Members from all parts of India join the *Sadhana*. A large number of *Sadhus*, *Sannyasins*, *Mahatmas* and poor are fed on these occasions.

The Charitable Dispensary at "Ananda Kutir" gives medical aid to the poor, the public and the pilgrims.

An Annakshetra is conducted in order to feed Mahatmas, the pilgrims and the poor.

Many leaflets and booklets are printed and distributed free by the Society and its branches. Anyone can bring out a reprint of these small booklets and leaflets and distribute the same free. Dissemination of spiritual knowledge is the highest form of *Yajna*.

A small Primary School is being conducted by the Society for the teaching of the three "R's" to the children of the locality.

Correspondence on intricate problems in the spiritual path is received and replies are given by *Swamiji Maharaj*.

The "Divine Life" is the monthly organ of the Society and is devoted to articles on *Yoga*, *Bhakti*, *Vedanta*, comparative religions, etc. It contains illuminating articles, poems, songs, *Kirtans*, lectures, etc., of Swami Sivananda. (Annual subscription is Rs. 3 Inland and Sh. 7 Foreign).

Bhagawad Gita, (original text, with word by word meaning, notes and commentary) by Swami Sivananda is supplied at *actual cost of production*.

On the 8th of September every year, the Birthday of the Founder is celebrated at the head-quarters and at all branches of the Society. Many *Mahatmas* and poor people are liberally fed on this occasion.

He who practises *Ahimsa*, *Satyam* and *Brahmacharya*—to the best of his ability—can become a member of the Society on payment of the annual fee of Re. 1 for every calendar year.

Voluntary donations are received from the public to disseminate the aims and objects of the Society and a statement of income and expenditure, duly audited, is given in the Annual Report.

All voluntary donations may kindly be addressed to :

The Secretary,
THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY,
ANANDA KUTIR, P. O.
Rikhikesh, (Himalayas).

